WARHAMMER 40,000

ARKS OF OMEN

ANGRON

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Arks of Omen: Angron*. This is the second book in this narrative series, and follows on from the events of *Arks of Omen: Abaddon* to provide the next exciting chapter of this galaxy-spanning tale. Great and terrible plans gather momentum. Savage new war fronts erupt into being amidst the stars. Blazing void ships echo to the thunder of gunfire and the screams of the dying. Now, amongst the mayhem, the Red Angel strikes to extinguish a blazing beacon of hope in the darkness.

Though he had waged his Long War for ten thousand years, Abaddon the Despoiler recognised it could still end in disaster. With so many warring factions so evenly matched, he foresaw a future where all were brought low by mutually assured destruction. He was further aware that the Gods of Chaos and their servants were unreliable allies at best, and thus likely to exacerbate these issues. More than this, he knew that, were he to find himself on the brink of victory without the express patronage of one or other of the gods, their servants would likely do all they could to sabotage him. Abaddon thus set an army of scholars and sorcerers to trawling the accumulated prophecies and apocrypha of the warring galaxy. He sought some unexpected edge or ultimate weapon, something that would decisively swing the Long War in his favour without the aid of the gods.

When the daemon Vashtorr the Arkifane manifested upon the bridge of the *Vengeful Spirit*, he revealed to Abaddon the prophecy he sought. By locating and combining esoteric artefacts scattered long ago across time and space, they would fashion a device Vashtorr called simply the Key. This could then be used to locate and to open a metaphysical lock, and to unleash an ancient weapon of galaxy-altering power.

Combining their resources and might, Abaddon and Vashtorr formed an uneasy alliance and fashioned the Arks of Omen. These colossal warships were wrought from mechanically parasitised space hulks. They were given into the command of the greatest champions of Chaos, the only price for such a mighty gift being that – before beginning their own rampages of destruction and conquest – those champions should recover their allotted Key-fragments from sites across the galaxy.

Accompanied by flotillas of heretical warships, each Ark formed the heart of a terrifying Balefleet. These fleets surged out into the stars to work Abaddon's will. One by one the Balefleets began to gather the Key-fragments, some of which were more ritually significant – and thus more vital – than others. Many were recovered only after bloody campaigns, while the determined efforts of Abaddon's foes saw some fragments denied him altogether. Yet all of the conflicts fought around and aboard the Arks of Omen were soon to be overshadowed. None could compare to the unimaginable butchery unleashed when the *Stygian Heart* and its Balefleet launched their attack upon the astropathic hub fortress of Malakbael.

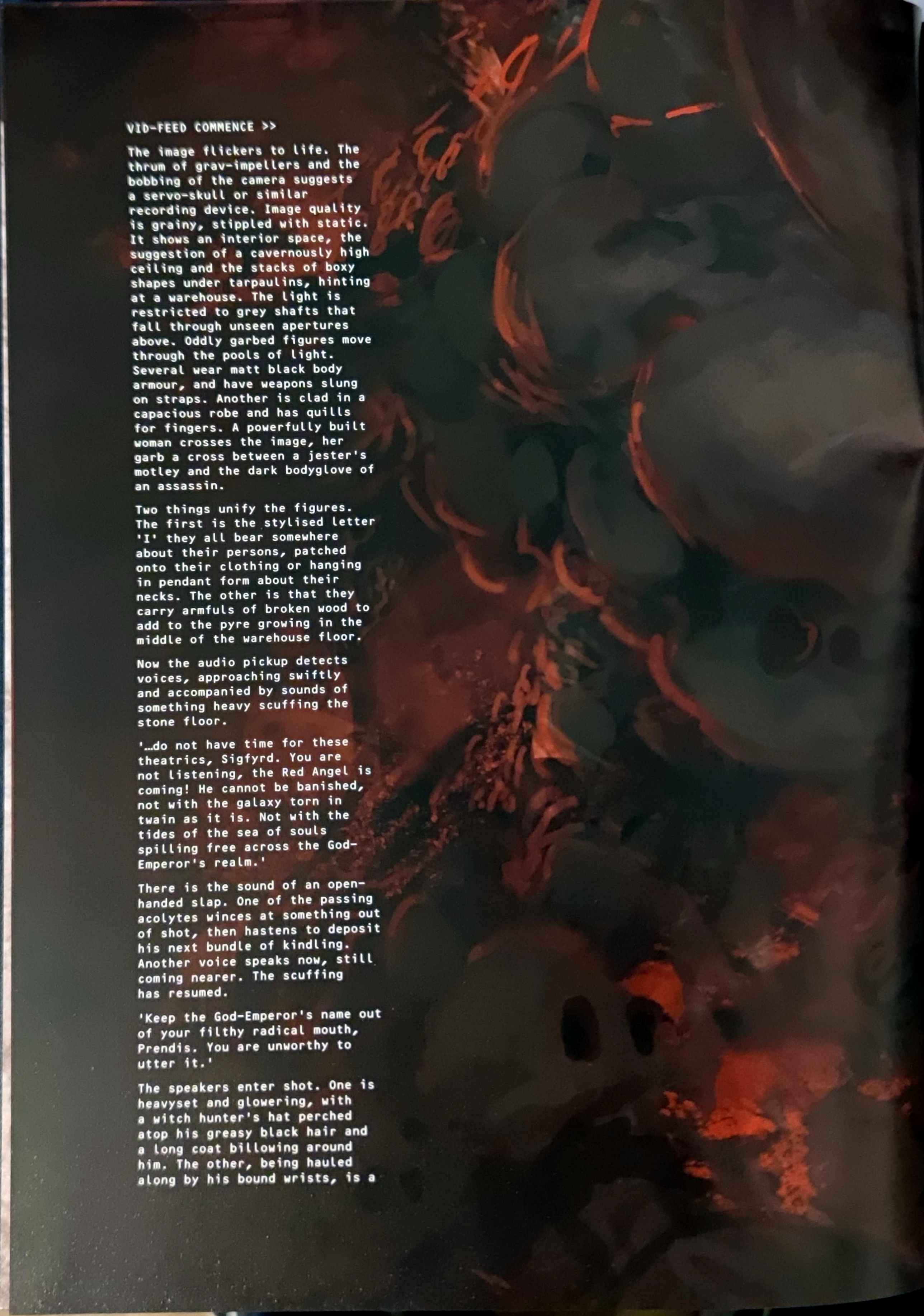
The Eaters of Worlds! The Blood God's sacred slaughtermen! Chosen Legion of Khorne! None there are who offer greater tribute to the Lord of Skulls, none more committed to battle in his name.

Many are those who brand the World Eaters shattered, fragmented sons of a broken father. Those same fools soon fall beneath the churning teeth of bloodied blades, their skulls cast flensed 'pon the offering pile.

Yet for all their sacred butchery, there are none amongst this blood-blessed brotherhood to compare to their sire.

He is the bladed hurricane. He is the unstoppable beast, fury given form, the gore-spattered demigod of carnage. He is the Red Angel, and daemons and mortals have slain and striven for the honour of fighting in his charnel shadow.

He is Angron, the eater of worlds, and his onset heralds death.



VID-FEED COMMENCE >>

The image flickers to life. The thrum of grav-impellers and the bobbing of the camera suggests a servo-skull or similar recording device. Image quality is grainy, stippled with static. It shows an interior space, the suggestion of a cavernously high ceiling and the stacks of boxy shapes under tarpaulins, hinting at a warehouse. The light is restricted to grey shafts that fall through unseen apertures above. Oddly garbed figures move through the pools of light. Several wear matt black body armour, and have weapons slung on straps. Another is clad in a capacious robe and has quills for fingers. A powerfully built woman crosses the image, her garb a cross between a jester's motley and the dark bodyglove of an assassin.

Two things unify the figures. The first is the stylised letter 'I' they all bear somewhere about their persons, patched onto their clothing or hanging in pendant form about their necks. The other is that they carry armfuls of broken wood to add to the pyre growing in the middle of the warehouse floor.

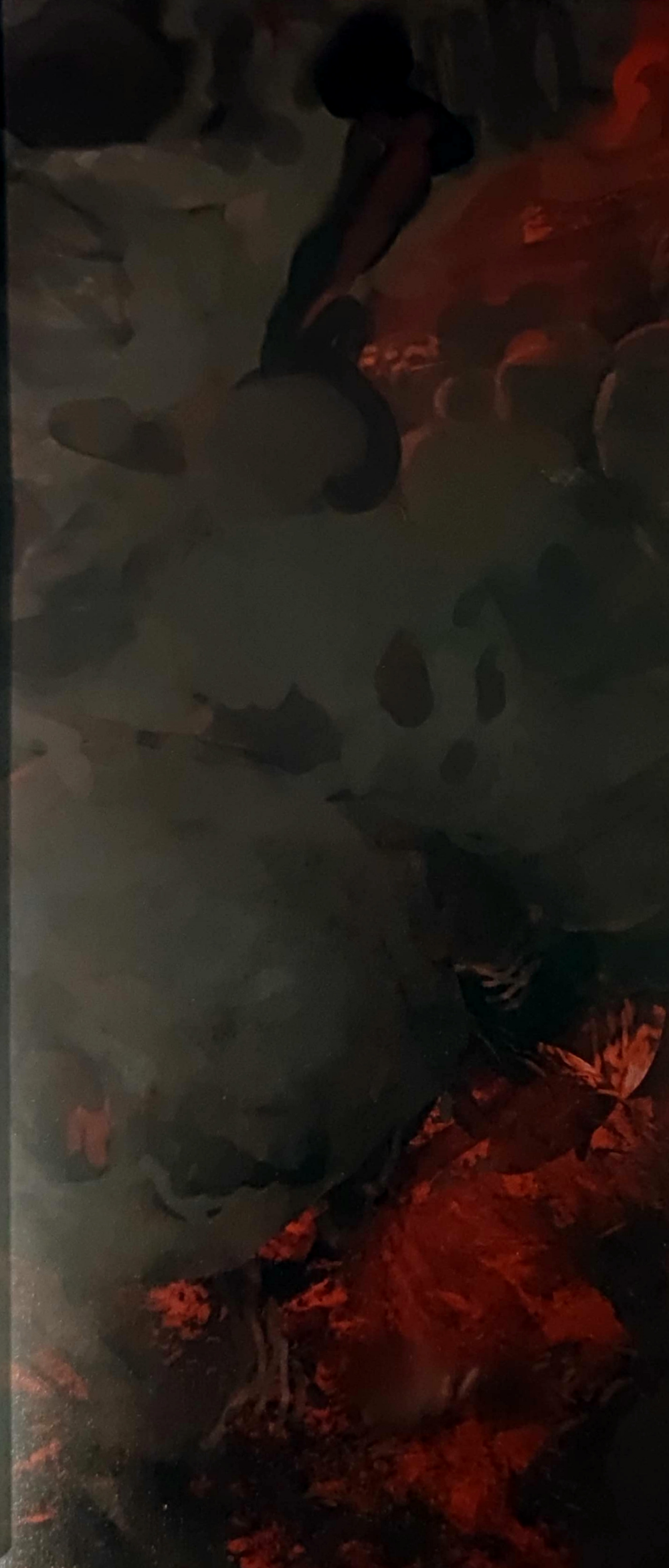
Now the audio pickup detects voices, approaching swiftly and accompanied by sounds of something heavy scuffing the stone floor.

'…do not have time for these theatrics, Sigfyrd. You are not listening, the Red Angel is coming! He cannot be banished, not with the galaxy torn in twain as it is. Not with the tides of the sea of souls spilling free across the God-Emperor's realm.'

There is the sound of an open-handed slap. One of the passing acolytes winces at something out of shot, then hastens to deposit his next bundle of kindling. Another voice speaks now, still coming nearer. The scuffing has resumed.

'Keep the God-Emperor's name out of your filthy radical mouth, Prendis. You are unworthy to utter it.'

The speakers enter shot. One is heavyset and glowering, with a witch hunter's hat perched atop his greasy black hair and a long coat billowing around him. The other, being hauled along by his bound wrists, is a



smaller man with a shaved scalp and a tattered crimson robe. He has a split lip and a swelling bruise under his eye. He catches sight of the pyre, and the stake rising from it. He redoubles his struggles and his voice rises.

'Sigfyrd! You cannot! You do not know the sacrifices I have made, the lives it has cost to know what I know!'

The witch hunter appears unmoved. With the aid of the big woman and one of the soldiers, he hoists Prendis aloft and lashes him to the stake. A design is now visible on the smaller man's chest, a stylised 'I' forming the centre of a skull-like rune. The camera cannot focus upon it without the image warping. Prendis speaks fast and breathlessly.

'Eight days, eight hours, eight minutes. That is how long we have between his banishment and his return! Always. Every time. He returns ever to a site where terrible bloodshed has transpired, and he is preceded by his Crimson Omens! They are a warning from the God-Emperor!'

'Let me guess,' Sigfyrd interjects, beckoning to one of his soldiers. A military-grade flamer is handed across. 'There's eight of them?'

'Yes!' exclaims Prendis. 'The Blood Rain, the Fleshbrand Plague, the Storm of Hate-'

'And what use is any of this alleged knowledge, tainted as it is by heresy?' asks Sigfyrd. He ignites the flamer's pilot light. Its hiss sounds serpentine through the vid-feed.

'It means I know where he came back this time!' yells Prendis, with the desperation of a man whose life's work is immolating before his eyes. 'It means I know where he is going, and we have to warn them! The Choral Engine must be silenced. It will draw Angr-'

The roar of the flamer drowns out Prendis' last words. After that comes the hungry crackle of burning wood, and the man's shrill screams.

'Contact Lady Emagna,' Sigfyrd tells someone out of shot as he watches the figure on the stake writhe and burn. 'Tell her the lies of the radical have been silenced.'

The chamber was a ruin. The devastation visited upon every inch of it was so absolute that even the vessel's master would have been hard-pressed to identify whether it had been a gun deck or a shrine, a crew berth or a launch bay. Walls, ceiling and floor were all scorched black, striped with long and ragged gouges. There was no air in the chamber. A stretch of one wall had been laid open to space, a gaping wound punched outward through the hide of the *Conqueror*. Whatever fittings or contents the chamber had held had all been sucked into the hungry void through that hole.

Any mortal being still trapped there after the emergency shutters slammed down would have been slain by explosive decompression or the suffocating cold of space. Not that any mortal could have endured the whirlwind of violence that gutted the chamber to begin with.

The thing who stood at the heart of the ruined chamber was no mortal, however, and did not suffer their weaknesses. He did not even notice the inimical environment surrounding him. Angron surveyed the space he had destroyed and neither knew nor cared what it had been, or why he had done this. There had been the anger, white-hot, pounding in time to the hammer blows beating within his mind. There had been an explosive outpouring of violence akin to the emergency venting of a Titan's overheating reactor. Now, there was the return to the smouldering wrath that never left him, the furnace that had scorched him from within for centuries beyond memory. And there was the pounding, pounding, pounding of the Butcher's Nails.

Angron dimly recalled a being like him but lesser, a brother long lost to time and to war. He recalled that being's assurances that any pain, even the Nails, could be endured by demigods such as they; that a pain borne for long enough would dull and cool like iron drawn from the forge, that it could be beaten with the hammer of the will until it was folded into one's own self as new strength.

Contempt boiled through Angron like lava overflowing a seething caldera. His lost brother's words had been no kindness, but rather an ignorant insult. Angron imagined them as the reassurances of a pampered lord to his starving hound that its hunger would only make it a keener hunter.

Angron knew better. Some wounds bled and never healed. There were shades of agony in existence that never dulled, but instead grew sharper and more savage over time. The occasional troughs in his endless pain existed only to emphasise the next, still-more-towering peaks of agony that followed them.

The pain didn't make him strong, but nor did it make him weak. It just was. The thing that made Angron strong was simply Angron.

He prowled across the ruined chamber to the edge of the rent he had smashed in the hull. A moment of true lucidity offered context. He was high up in one of the strange gothic spires that had sprouted from the *Conqueror*'s hull like malformed spurs of bone. Honeycombing the structures seemingly at random, the chambers and corridors in these towers lacked the solid bulkheads and thick outer walls boasted by the *Conqueror*'s main bulk. It was, Angron considered, an inexcusable weakness spawned of sorcerous corruption. He had split the vessel's skin from within with contemptuous ease.

A memory tried to surface from amidst the scorched desolation of his thoughts, of a time when the *Conqueror* had not suffered such weaknesses.

'Enough of this. Fire the Ursus Claws!'

The voice of a ghost. It echoed up from dark wells of memory so clotted with old gore that they had turned black.

The memory slipped through his fingers and was gone. It was a grain of sand upon the arena floor, splashed with blood and turned to congealed muck. Angron dug his talons into the metal decking in frustration. His lips skinned back from a mouthful of fangs.

He glared out through the rent, at the stars scattering the velvet darkness beyond. The pulse of their distant lights came in time with the pounding, pounding, pounding in his mind.

He hated their purity.

He hated them because they could not feel pain.

He hated them because one day, though they might live for the spans of millions of transient Human lives and burn near as furiously as he, in the end it would be within their gift to die.

Angron recalled other stars spread out above battlefields and burning worlds, or scattered as backdrop behind blazing warships that flung destruction at one another across the uncaring void. They brought to mind spectators who stared down from high seats, aloof from the pain and hatred of those who fought for their entertainment.

'Arrogant...' he snarled. Angron's voice was jagged boulders grinding one another to molten rubble in the heart of a raging volcano. It was the rumble of tank tracks grinding over bone, the crackle of flames amidst wreckage. It sounded through the vacuum in defiance of reality's meagre physical laws.

Angron hated the stars with the same passion that he hated every other thing in existence that had ever caught his notice. Yet their distant flames paled when compared to the supernatural brightness of the light that waited for him somewhere ahead. That he hated with far greater vehemence.

The stars, after all, burned with fires born of reality. The light ahead was something altogether different, altogether more agonising to behold, spawned as it was from the song of treacherous sorcery.

Though the chamber in which he stood was wide and high ceilinged, suddenly Angron felt confined by it like an animal trapped in a cage. He threw himself forward into the void. He would face the light unconstrained and wrathful.

Angron spread his wings and soared into the darkness. Just as the restrictions of sound in a vacuum had no hold upon the concentrated warp-stuff of his corporeal form, neither did considerations of inertia or weightlessness. He did not fly by some mundane process of displaced air or applied force. He flew because he willed it so, and his was a will fit to dominate reality. Angron fought against existence as though it were any other foe, and like any other foe he broke it with ease.

Now he flew up and out, wings beating, gaining height until the *Conqueror*'s hull was passing beneath him like the body of some deep-sea leviathan. Distant starlight whitewashed the warship's starboard flank while throwing the port into stark shadow. Angron glowered at the sight of the warp corruption that had dug its tendrils so deeply into his flagship of old. A more sentimental being might have felt sorrow or regret at the sight. Angron felt nothing but the endless rage and pain. The *Conqueror* was no more or less tainted by Chaos than he, and it would fight for Khorne just as he would. Like him, it would reap a mighty tally in the Blood God's name.

The warship's mountainous bridge-structure sat near its keel, and it swept towards him now. Angron beat his wings again, twisting in the void, and landed to perch like some huge crimson gargoyle atop a crenellated spire. He glowered ahead, towards the light that grew brighter and closer with every passing moment.

It was not a light of the eye, but rather of the mind. Angron could sense that its source was still distant, at least one more headlong plunge through the battering tides of the warp. Yet even from here he felt its incorporeal heat simmering against his flesh, heard its faint but soaring psychic aria and tasted the greasy taint of sorcery upon his forked tongue.

Angron hated witchery with an intensity only exceeded by that of the Dark God whose power flowed through him. He would have gladly followed this trail to its end whether the so-called Warmaster had commanded him to or not. Nothing ever dispelled Angron's agonies, but the wanton slaughter of witches certainly made them more worth suffering, at least for the few moments it took to swat aside their cantrips and rip them limb from limb.

Yet there was something more that drew him towards this particular beacon of witchery. Its pull was as magnetic as it was maddening. It was also achingly familiar in a way that Angron could not quite define. That inability only fed the flames of his anger, and his talons tightened into a crushing grip that buckled metal while the Nails pounded, pounded, pounded in his mind.

More memories swam unbidden through the infernal heat-haze of his mind's eye. He saw again his rebellion, his comrades in Desh'ea dying one by one, and he wishing only to join them but instead being snatched away by a numinous being whom he hated above all others.

He stood before the walls of that being's palace and he defied the wards, and the guns, and he gave his flesh and blood in sacrifice to Khorne. He rose in raiment of running gore and searing brass and he fought again in the Blood God's name.

Why had the psychic beacon dredged thoughts of his father from the bloody mire of his memory? Angron did not want to think about the Emperor, and he knew that the light ahead was not that of the Astronomican. But that infuriating familiarity persisted, a splinter lodged in the pummelled meat of his mind. Angron threw back his head and roared, and the sound rolled through the void like a thunderclap. He would learn the nature of that hateful glare soon enough, and when he did he would do whatever violence must be done to extinguish it.

Nor would Angron fight alone, though he cared little about such things. Turning his back upon the witchlight, he surveyed his fleet. Spread out behind the *Conqueror* in a ragged wedge was a veritable armada of renegade warships. Former battleships and cruisers of the Imperial Navy jostled for position with muscular Space Marine void craft, freakish vessels of the Dark Mechanicum, and even some craft either belonging to or taken forcibly from xenos mercenaries. At the heart of their formation sailed an immense space hulk above whose dorsal mass flickered a captive warp portal. Angron was dimly aware that this vessel was the *Clarion Dire*, commanded by Lord Karakka Bloodfist and sent to recover some prize from Malakbael for the Despoiler. If Abaddon expected Angron to defend that lumpen

moon of a craft, or make any effort to facilitate its mission, he would be disappointed. The very presumption of such notions made Angron grind his fangs together with fury.

Nearly all of the assembled warships displayed some degree of empyric corruption, be it blood-slick fleshmetal extrusions, masses of barbed brass chains like octopodal tentacles, colossal hound's-head prows whose yawning jaws belched flames, or any of a myriad other deformities. Angron could also see dozens of different colour schemes and heraldic designs upon the vessels' hulls. Some were displayed with martial pride; others looked hastily daubed and were marred by blast scorches and impaled corpses.

Dozens of renegade warbands, traitor Chapters, fallen mortal regiments and turncoat Titan Legions were present here. Yet outnumbering them all were the warships of Angron's own World Eaters. Again and again the emblem was repeated: a doomed planet trapped within fanged and crushing jaws. It appeared on ancient battle barges whose hulls were all streaked gore and rusted brass. It stood out proud on the prows and flanks of cruisers and escorts clad in hues of crimson and bone, and even upon a few vessels still bearing the ghost of their Legion's white and blue.

Angron did not know and did not care how so many of his World Eaters came to be here. He was in little doubt that this was the greatest gathering of their strength to be seen since the final days of Horus' vainglorious war. Some mechanism or machination had brought them all together to follow him in the attack upon the witch-beacon, but if it was something of his own doing Angron did not remember it. Perhaps this was the Despoiler's meddling?

The thought stoked Angron's rage afresh. He had no need of this vast army that followed at his heels, did not require reinforcement or appreciate the implication of weakness it represented.

Yet at the same time, he knew the unimaginable devastation it could unleash. Angron imagined the cataclysmic bloodshed to come, the mountain range of skulls that would be raised in tribute to Khorne. The thought made the Nails hammer hot in his mind – pounding, pounding, pounding – driving him from his perch. With another roar, Angron leapt into the void and beat his wings furiously, as if through suitably violent action he might drive away the pain.

As he flew, Angron saw yet more Khornate void ships tearing their way from the warp into reality. Their battered hulls trailed streams of ectoplasm that tattered apart and streaked the void with warp-filth. They reminded Angron of entrails, ripped from a foe's gut and spilled steaming across the ground.

The latecomers hoped to muscle into the formation, each trying to find a spot as close to the glorious *Conqueror* as possible. Angron saw gun decks unshrouded and turrets swivel as the craft sought to bully their way in, the fangs of canids bared in threat to lesser members of the pack. One huge Oberon-class battleship – adorned in full World Eaters panoply – scattered a swarm of frigates as it took up position brazenly close behind the *Conqueror*: Angron wondered for a fleeting moment whether Khârn was aboard the craft. The sheer aggression of the manoeuvre smacked of his brute directness, and Angron didn't doubt that his one-time equerry was somewhere amidst this gathering of might.

How big would the fleet grow, he wondered? And how long could so many devotees of the Lord of Battle wait before their patience frayed, before they turned guns and blades upon one another and made crimson offering to Khorne?

Ultimately neither question mattered, because neither he nor the *Conqueror* would be waiting any longer to find out. The ship had only dropped out of the warp in order to take astromantic bearings for its final warp jump to the Malak System. Whether those readings had been completed or not, Angron would order immediate translation. He had no fear of misadventure within the sea of souls, and he cared nothing for the fate of those who followed him. Let the strong keep up if they could – they at least might prove capable of taking some loyalist heads upon Malakbael.

As Angron dove back down towards one of the *Conqueror*'s embarkation decks, he felt again the invasive glare of the sorcerous beacon, and his rage burned white-hot at its touch. The Butcher's Nails pounded, pounded, pounded in his mind, and he vowed to himself that he would drown that witchlight in blood until it could never be lit again.

•••

In a distant neverplace amidst the tides of the warp, within a brazier-lit sanctum aboard an Ark of Omen, a huge crystal orb flickered and glowed as it showed Angron vanishing into the *Conqueror*'s embarkation deck. Three hulking armoured figures stood equidistant around the orb with their force staves held high. The witchfire that leapt between the heads of the staves illuminated the three warrior-mystics. It danced across warped power armour painted in the panoply of the Tzeentch-worshipping renegade warband known as the Scourged.

Their leader wore a flowing robe over his armour. His helm boasted a pair of curling horns that jutted from its

crown, and its faceplate was blank and eyeless. His name was Apophari Quen, Lord of the Tomeweaver Coven, and he was master of the Ark of Omen known as the *Stygian Heart*. When Quen spoke, his voice bled from the air around him in a susurrus of interlaced whispers.

'Even from afar and with the warp to sustain our sorcery, it is difficult to maintain our vigil upon the beast. His very nature is anathema to magicks.'

'Yet we have seen enough, have we not?' asked Memnech Krade in a vox-amplified rumble. The High Magister of Quen's elite guard, the Ninefold Curse, Krade was a hulking monster clad in mutated Terminator plate. He had neither helm nor head, instead seeing the immutable truth of all about him through nine yellow eyes that had grown out of his armour.

'We have. The beast makes all speed for Malakbael. If we do not hasten, he will despoil our prize.'

'It must not be permitted,' hissed the third of their number, Lakshet-Who-Hears. He was a hunched figure; his armour gnarled and twisted and festooned with vox apertures and audial pickups. It was both the blessing and the curse of the Scourged to hear every lie uttered by mortal man, but Lakshet-Who-Hears had taken this to a macabre extreme. Neither sound nor even thought escaped his unnatural hearing. He was the coven's spymaster and greatseer both, and it was he who had first learned of Malakbael and its sorcerous prize.

'It will not be,' Quen replied. 'The duplicity at work upon Malakbael, the forbidden powers that have been unlocked – these are precious jewels to be taken up and worked by the clever fingers of the Changer of the Ways. They are not for Khorne's idiot dogs to savage and destroy.'

'And what of Abaddon's prize?' asked Krade as they lowered their staves and the image of the *Conqueror* faded from their seeing stone.

'The Coven devastated Aelech IV as he commanded,' said Quen. 'We delivered his gewgaw through the rift in the ritual chamber, did we not?'

'But he seeks a prize here also, or he would not have sent the *Clarion Dire* amongst Angron's hosts,' Krade persisted. 'He will learn of it if we steal that which he desires.'

'But that is not what we seek upon Malakbael,' hissed Lakshet-Who-Hears. 'I know not what ritual dainty the Warmaster desires upon that world, for this even I have not heard, but I do know that the device the corpse-worshippers have awoken is not it. So long as our attack does not hinder Abaddon's agents in their recovery mission, I perceive no way in which we might anger him. Indeed, our presence here will only augment Angron's armada, no?'

'So many ships, so many warriors,' crooned Krade. 'What strength can the corpse-worshippers possess at Malakbael, that so many are sent to face it?'

'Tzeentch will aid us in this,' said Quen, and the certainty of fanaticism burned in his breast as he spoke. 'How mighty is the source of this sorcery, and to what ends might we turn it in the Changer's favour? He will see and he will lend us his aid.'

'And besides, if the foe truly be so many as you fear, the beast and his minions race close upon our heels,' said Lakshet-Who-Hears, a smirk in his voice. 'Let them tear one another apart while we claim our prize.'

'Still, should we not send ships ahead to scout the enemy's strength?' asked Krade. 'You have said yourself, the radiance of this device blinds the third eye and fouls our foresight. It is not our way to fight so blinded.'

'You have eyes enough for us all, Krade,' said Quen. 'I heed your counsel, but you know I cannot follow it. The delay would be unconscionable. The beast would arrive before us and he would destroy our prize. And I do not believe that the Changer would not have handed us this secret only to watch us fail. Spread the word to the captains of the Balefleet. Ready the Coven. We go to war for the glory of Tzeentch!'

'The Blood God hates sorcery, and all those weaklings who cower in its paltry light. Such curs are good for naught but slaughter. I shall be their executioner, and I will pile their heads high.'

- Angron the Red Angel

++ TOIL WITHOUT QUESTION, LEAVE THOUGHT TO YOUR BETTERS ++

FLEET QUARTUS

Each of the Indomitus Crusade Fleets was a vast organisation made up of multiple battle groups, all of which were huge flotillas in their own right with strength enough to conquer entire sub-sectors. For all their might, however, the fleets were charged with stabilising a dark and tumultuous galaxy, and their roads were not easily travelled.

When Indomitus Crusade Fleet Quartus left its mustering system, it did so amidst great fanfare. Hundreds of warships bore billions of warriors out into the darkness, all of them determined to reclaim the systems of the Imperium Sanctus after the anarchy and horror of the Noctis Aeterna. Its battle groups set their headings and leapt into the empyrean, each according to the initial orders given to their commanding groupmasters.

It was the duty of Fleet Quartus to divide and push out to both the galactic east and west of the Sol System. Its role was to secure and fortify systems already swept clear by the surging battle groups of several other Indomitus Crusade Fleets, while simultaneously purging neighbouring regions of space of any lingering hostile elements.

It was not the most glorious of all the fleets' roles, but Fleetmaster Trinicus Abcondis understood that it would not have been ordered had Lord Guilliman not believed it necessary. He thus determined to do his duty to the best of his abilities, and to ensure the purgation and fortification of every sub-sector to which his battle groups were dispatched. Despite his good intentions, however, Abcondis' troubles soon multiplied.

WOES UPON WOES

First came the campaign amidst the Bargheist Stars. Battle Groups Cerastus, Gamma and Lambdax had raced ahead to help the Rift Stalkers Chapter conclude seven years of bloody battle against massed heretic forces there. Victory turned to bloodshed, however, when the Orks of Waaagh! Grukk slammed into the Bargheist Stars even as Imperial forces celebrated victory. A grim missive was all that came back to Fleetmaster Abcondis, warning that the three battle groups were hard-pressed and would be committed in the Bargheist Stars for the foreseeable future.

Next came Kelmer's Folly. After a string of increasingly improbable victories over the cults of the Ysmar Sub-sector, Groupmaster Kelmer committed the entire strength of Battle Group Forthrax to the attack against the Stygion System. Kelmer's lieutenants and advisers had counselled caution, but the bellicose nobleman would not hear of it. Instead, he led what he believed would be the killing blow against his enemies' stronghold in person. The subsequent ambush by Alpha Legion and Night Lords forces was savage indeed, costing the battle group over a third of its strength and Kelmer his life. Chapter Master Yosharo DuGal of the Void Talons successfully extricated the battle group's remaining strength and took command, but the defeat was a black mark of shame nonetheless.

More strife followed. The supposedly pacified Agorad Belt revealed a hidden xeno-cult infestation that took eight months to expunge. Renegade separatists on Jormangast assassinated the prominent oracle Asclemanda, depriving Battle Group Kilox of her skill with the Imperial Tarot. Widespread ration spoilage and fuel shortages saw Battle Group Dominus delayed by many weeks during the Dhorica Push. Incessant Drukhari raids caused the advance through the Porphys Nebula to slow to a crawl, shortly before Abcondis himself was wounded during a boarding action by Chaos Space Marines upon his flagship, *Honour of Terra*. The fleetmaster was unable to attend to his duties during his painstaking recovery and, by the time he returned to the front lines, localised warp storms had blown up out of nowhere to stall the entire eastward advance of his fleet.

Abcondis was by this point nearing his wits' end. He was heard to remark that, if the luckless fifth fleet was considered cursed, he did not dare contemplate what might be said of the fourth. Empyric conditions had worsened to such a degree in the path of Fleet Quartus' eastward advance that astropathic communication was almost impossible, and even the shortest warp jump suicidally dangerous. So desperate had Abcondis become that he had his most trusted agents reach out for aid through every available channel, even those considered suspect bordering on illegal. He had to find some means by which the fourth fleet might catch up to its demanding schedule of conquests and do its duty to Lord Guilliman.

THE CHORAL ENGINE

The answer to Abcondis' quandary came from an Inquisitor of the Ordo Hereticus named Lady Emagna. When the humble, shaven-headed Emagna presented herself within his command sanctum, the fleetmaster first thought her a lost scribe. When he learned of her true nature and beheld her Ordo rosette, he instead feared that she had come to exact judgement for his failures. Abcondis was thus thoroughly off balance when Lady Emagna at last revealed that she had come both to aid him, and to seek his aid in return.

Emagna told the fleetmaster of a world named Malakbael, in the Malak System, which by chance lay towards the spinward edge of his fleet's eastern advance. On that world Emagna's agents had discovered an ancient archeotech device of immense size and potentially incredible power. It was the opinion of her recruited tech-magi that this machine – whose syphon-coils ran all the way down into the planet's core – dated back to the Dark Age of Technology. Yet Emagna assured the alarmed Abcondis that she and her comrades had performed the most rigorous battery of tests imaginable to ensure the device's spiritual purity. It bore neither the taint of abominable intelligences, nor any mark of warp corruption despite its nigh-unimaginable age.

This device Inquisitor Emagna named the Choral Engine. She believed that – if woken – it could serve as a localised psychic beacon and communications conduit second only to the sacred Astronomican. Abcondis did not need her to expound on the benefits such a machine would confer upon his beleaguered battle groups. He did, however, require a great deal of convincing that such a plan was sane, let alone viable. Much like the Astronomican, Emagna had discovered that the Choral Engine required Human psykers to act as both its foci and its fuel. Indeed, she hoped that Abcondis' position of power coupled with her own unquestionable authority would be enough to remove the remaining barriers to her securing a ready supply of such psychic mutants and bringing the Choral Engine to life.

Abcondis came as close as he dared to defying the Inquisitor, and agonised long over his choices. Yet in the end she bore the authority of the Emperor's holy Ordos, and the answers to all of his problems. Abcondis acquiesced.

GLORI EMAGNA

Inquisitor Glori Emagna styled herself a humble penitent, with smock and shaven head. Her will was that of the most ruthless tyrant, however. It was her belief that the Imperium fundamentally misunderstood, and thus misused, witches. She felt sure that psykers were not truly people, but rather flesh-and-blood machines, gifts from the God-Emperor intended to serve as message conduits, weapons of war and navigational devices. So much disaster and strife could be avoided, claimed Emagna, if Humanity would simply stop treating witches as in any way Human and instead bind, subjugate and make use of them as unthinking, unfeeling devices. Whether these beliefs led her to the Choral Engine, or whether its discovery was the source of her convictions, only Emagna herself knew.

THE CHORAL ENGINE

Lady Emagna had in her thrall a staff of archeovists, cryptohistoritors and Mechanicus magi whose specialisms and theories placed them on the very cusp of tech-heresy. It had taken this cabal decades to unearth and begin to comprehend the ancient Choral Engine, ascribing names and functions to its component parts based on their own preconceptions and prejudices.

The Resonatum

This echoing tunnel formed an outer ring around the Choral Engine's central Sanctum with a diameter of precisely four hundred and one feet. The magi described it as reminiscent of a colossal electromagnet or sacred particle collider. The smooth and empty tunnel was ringed every hundred and one feet with a dense collar of bristling technologies, with stepped metal bridges leading over them. When the Choral Engine was in operation, crackling shock waves of psychic energy thundered around and around the Resonatum and served somehow to amplify the signal from the Engine. Tunnels and bridges below and above the Resonatum connected the Sanctum to the rest of the Engine's outer complex, for to stand within it while the Engine was in operation was a death sentence.

The Sanctum

The central chamber of the Choral Engine was a vast space known as the Sanctum. The inner surfaces of this cavernous dome were thick with nests of cable, intricate circuitry, miles of dense wiring and panels bearing constellations of winking lights and lenses. A ring of towering cogitators formed a hundred-feet-high toroid at the heart of the chamber, with banks of operator thrones cradled in rows of ascending gantries all around them. It was from here that the operation of the Choral Engine and the monitoring of its layered moderator fail-safe protocols was controlled by a staff of magi and painstakingly integrated servitors.

The Choristry Pits

In the subsidiary catacombs below the Sanctum's mezzanine floor, open-fronted techno-sarcophagi known as choristry pits ringed the central chamber in staggered rows. A psyker installed into one of these choristry pits could expect to live for anything between three to ten days, depending upon their mental and physical fortitude. During that time they poured their psychic energies and life-force both into the Choral Engine to provide it with power. Once their service was done their burned and withered husk would be removed, and the choristry pit sanitised before the next occupant was installed.

The Syphon Coil

Colossal in scale and enigmatic in its archeotechnological workings, the Syphon Coil extended from the base of the Choral Engine and speared down through Malakbael's crust to pierce its very core. It drew immense reserves of geothermal power from the depths, as well as appearing to harvest a wealth of subsidiary ores and minerals to facilitate the Engine's widespread – and equally ineffable – self-repair systems.

The Focusing Vane

A network of gantries criss-crossed the apex of the Sanctum's domed ceiling. Through their centre descended the vast circular stalactite of archeotech that formed the true heart of the Choral Engine. Stretching down to within two hundred feet of the cogitator toroid and pointing right at its centre, the so-called Focusing Vane contained a quartet of chambers into which were wired exceptionally talented Astropaths. It was through their powerful and disciplined minds that the full energies of the Choral Engine flowed, up and out into the depths of the warp – at least until the Engine's energies burned them from the inside out and they writhed and screamed their way into an early grave.

A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

In the first weeks following the awakening of the Choral Engine, robust astropathic links were renewed with all eastward-moving battle groups from Fleet Quartus. This was an especially impressive feat considering the warp storms still raging across half a segmentum, and the fact that the battle groups in question were scattered across almost a score of sub-sectors. Imperial Navigators described the Choral Engine's invisible psychic light as augmenting and strengthening that of the Astronomican, as though someone shone a powerful lantern through a focusing lens and so used its beam to pierce the obscuring mists. So powerful was its localised effect that even the warp storms roiling around the Malak System began to recede.

By the end of two months by Fleet Quartus' Tempus Indomitus reckoning, Battle Groups Alphae, Dominus, Forthrax and Jovia were all advancing into new territories with unprecedented speed and efficiency. Other, further-flung battle groups had stabilised their previously perilous situations. Warp storm activity was virtually nil within a hundred light years of Malakbael, seemingly quelled by the Choral Engine's radiance. It was not hard to argue that the device was aiding Fleet Quartus, and indeed other localised Imperial forces, in a variety of ways.

Throughout the Amnaris Cleansing, for example, the heretic Word Bearers found their dark rituals frustrated by the song of the Choral Engine. This conflict took place across the worlds of the Amnaris System, which lay within two swift warp-jumps of Malakbael and well within the Engine's radiance. Already supported by turncoat planetary governors, heretic militias and teeming Chaos cults, the Word Bearers had further counted upon conjuring daemons in great number to aid them in the fight against task forces of Battle Group Jovia. Their efforts faltered and failed time and again, however. Entities manifested only to be burned away by invisible radiance within minutes of piercing the veil. Other daemons shied away from the brilliance spilling through from realspace and would not come forth. Only the daemons of Khorne seemed able to force their way into reality in any great strength, and even these were scorched and discorporated eventually.

Meanwhile, the fighting upon the world of Schvëddor II took a sudden and spectacular turn when the light of the Choral Engine was focused there. Task Force IV of Battle Group Alphae had been deadlocked for almost six months in the Schvëddor System, unable to force a breach in the chain of fortified worlds and void stations held against them by the Iron Warriors and their heretic allies. One prong of the Choral Engine's Focusing Vane was directed towards Schvëddor II, with the intent of sending an astropathic message to check if further reinforcement was required. Yet as the invisible psychic radiance of the Engine enveloped the world, loyalist battle-psykers all across Schvëddor II found their powers augmented. Drawing upon this sudden reserve of psychic might, the armies of the God-Emperor surged to victory on that world in less than a week. Here was the line-breaking assault that eventually collapsed the heretic defences throughout the system, and if the loyalist psykers on Schvëddor II were burned out and slain by their miraculous exertions, that only made them glorious martyrs in their comrades' eyes.

One victory followed another. Fleetmaster Abcondis remained wary, for the full abilities of the Choral Engine seemed to him dimly understood and prone to sudden and unforeseen manifestation. Yet he could not deny the efficacy of the device, nor the ever-growing tally of conquests it delivered. Abcondis even relocated his own command headquarters to the Malak System, withdrawing elements of Battle Group Alphae from the line to garrison Malakbael and its sister worlds, Malakra, Malakvar and Malakshet. In less than one year by the fleet's Tempus Indomitus, the spiral towards disaster had been arrested then reversed. Fleet Quartus had caught up with the punishing schedule it had been set. Abcondis remained no less frightened of Inquisitor Emagna or the strange archeotech of the Choral Engine, but he felt increasingly confident that he had made the correct decision in trusting both.

The temporal distortion of warp travel had long impacted Humanity in its efforts to bridge the gulfs between the stars. It was for this reason that each Indomitus Crusade Fleet maintained its own Tempus Indomitus, defined as the local passage of time recorded by the fleet's flagship. When other fleet elements regrouped with their flagship they would re-set their own chrons to this local time, even if it differed by years from their own.

Little did Abcondis imagine the immense heretic war fleets even then bearing down upon his position. Others had perceived the peril, however, and were speeding towards Malakbael with their own agenda.

THE EYES OF TITAN

Few imperial organisations are as highly classified, as secretive or as martially and psychically skilled as the Grey Knights. An entire Space Marine Chapter of psychic templars steeped in counter-daemonic combat doctrine and lore, they are a weapon like no other in the Imperium's ongoing fight against Chaos. Yet with their numbers so few, it is necessary for the Grey Knights to employ esoteric methods of intelligence gathering to ensure they deploy their forces where they are most needed. This strategic scrying is performed by their Prognosticars, who peer into silvered mirrors and read the skeins of prophecy to discover where the most pressing supernatural threats will arise.

It was in these shimmering mirrors that the Prognosticars bore witness to a blazing psychic beacon, ringed by the incautious faithful and burning so bright in the warp that it pierced the deepest gulfs of the empyrean. They witnessed countless bloody roads overlapping, and entangling, and converging about the beacon's base. An armoured giant stood silhouetted behind the scene and raised a taloned hand so that its jagged shadow spread long and dark. Then that figure faded as the fires of the beacon erupted white hot and leapt high as a mountain's peak, while above it the skies turned crimson. The faithful figures ringing the flames turned to flee their rebellious pyre, but something was amongst them, a monster that felled them with blows from its axe. And each time the figure struck, so the sound of a hammer striking an anvil rang out louder and louder until with a last titanic concussion the pyre detonated, and the vision ended in a blinding wash of flame.

Experts in divination and the reading of signs, the Grey Knights discerned much from this vision and knew growing dread at what it foreboded. Moreover, they were able to determine where – if not by what means – disaster would come to pass. The Grand Masters of the Chapter wasted no time in assembling a sizeable strike force from the Fourth Brotherhood and dispatching it to the Malak System under the command of the redoubtable Brother-Captain Drystann Cromm. His duty was to discover all he could of the nature of the impending disaster, and to prevent it from coming to pass by whatever means necessary.

The Grey Knights travelled aboard a sleek strike cruiser named *Unrelenting*, a vessel forged to fight the most nightmarish wars and endure the most horrific conditions. Even so, they were surprised at how easily their ship traversed the tides of the warp as they neared the Malak System. Their Navigator was awed by the wondrous psychic radiance into whose heart they sailed, while their Astropaths sensed the most formidable nexus of warp-borne communication they had ever encountered.

The source of these miracles became apparent soon after the *Unrelenting* translated from the warp into realspace in the Malak System. Uncertain precisely what strange witchery was at work, but sensing no obvious taint within it, Brother-Captain Cromm gave the order for his vessel to reveal itself to the cluster of Imperial warships in geostationary orbit above Malakbael. The Grey Knights swept in swiftly, giving Fleetmaster Abcondis time neither to conceal anything he might feel would rouse their ire, nor to recall the patrol groups of warships scattered through the rest of the system. Before he knew it, Abcondis found himself in the presence of Brother-Captain Cromm and a band of his elite Paladins, who had teleported aboard the *Honour of Terra* without warning.

For all his seniority, even Abcondis had never heard of the Grey Knights. Still, he had the sense to be terrified of them. Standing in his command sanctum with the enormous armoured figures looming over him and demanding answers, the fleetmaster wondered whether he was about to face execution for his sins after all. To his credit, Abcondis did not cower, but instead remained straight-backed and firm-jawed as he answered all of the Space Marines' questions about the Choral Engine to the best of his abilities. Abcondis extolled the virtues of the machine and the victories that his forces had won with its aid. He was clear on the point that everything that had happened here bore the Inquisitorial seal of approval.

For his part, Brother-Captain Cromm sensed honesty and honour in the fleetmaster's bearing. Of course, if the man proved to have been duped by servants of the Dark Powers, that would not save him. Cromm informed Abcondis that he would make haste to the planet's surface and inspect the Choral Engine for himself, and that he would find and question Lady Emagna – who had last been reported within the Engine's Sanctum – at the earliest opportunity. If this device bore the taint of heresy about it then Cromm was unequivocal as to the consequences that would follow.

The Brother-Captain had heard enough to intuit the true nature of the psychic beacon. He knew that soon enough a vast traitor host

BROTHER-CAPTAIN CROMM

Drystann Cromm was an exemplar of the psychic martial prescience for which the Grey Knights Fourth Brotherhood was renowned. Masterful with the blades of both the hand and the mind, he could sustain a blistering psychic and physical assault and stay several steps ahead of even the swiftest or most monstrous foes. Cromm was known also for being an exceptionally dependable and cool-headed commander, able to temper the temptations offered by gifts of foresight with a pragmatism and stalwart determination that held his warriors back from taking unnecessary – if well informed – risks. His considered disposition saw to it that he neither condemned the Choral Engine on sight, nor became swept up in the possibilities of its use. He would do his duty, unfalteringly, after first considering all the information and weighing all the risks to his beloved Imperium of Mankind.

would be drawn to its light, as prophesied by the Prognosticars. Intuition told him it was too late to order the beacon doused. Instead, he commanded Abcondis to employ its powers to rally all the forces he could to the Malak System. They would make their stand against the darkness here, but in the aftermath he would have his answers regarding the origins and the nature of the Choral Engine.

THE GRAND MUSTER

Fleetmaster Abcondis had earned his lofty position of power. Roboute Guilliman had chosen him personally from amongst a raft of candidates, judging the grizzled admiral to be wise, capable, an exceptional tactician and – crucially – a man of prodigious confidence and charisma. Abcondis had faced battle against heretics and xenos both, and had confronted the possibility of his own death time and again. He had fought blade to claw against ravening Tyranid horrors when they tore their way into the bridge of his flagship during the battle of Orenghuld Reach.

Despite all this, Abcondis was left shaken to his core by the Grey Knights' visitation. He found himself questioning once again Lady Emagna's unshakeable faith in the righteous purity of her actions and the machine he had helped her awaken. Doubt threatened to worm its way into the fleetmaster's heart. He wondered whether he had unintentionally made himself complicit in heresy. Abcondis kept his fears to himself, however, maintaining for his subordinates the aspect of a confident commander certain in his choices and virtuous in his actions. They needed to have absolute faith in him, he knew, for if the Grey Knights were right then a foe like nothing they had ever faced was even now bearing down upon them.

Abcondis might have harboured private doubts about the sanctity of the Choral Engine, but he was certain of its efficacy. Borne along bright psychic channels, cries for urgent reinforcement raced out from Malakbael to every battle group of Fleet Quartus. Abcondis did not wish to see his fleet's conquests abandoned, but Brother-Captain Cromm had left him in no doubt as to the severity of the threat. The orders to each groupmaster were to send back all those forces they could spare to join the Malakbael muster without jeopardising their own battle fronts. Each missive was sent under vermillion-grade encryption. Each made clear that – should Malakbael and the Choral Engine be lost – the consequences for Fleet Quartus would be disastrous.

Abcondis deployed the vessels and soldiery of Battle Group Alphae throughout the Malak System in an efficient defensive dispersal. His own *Honour of Terra* hung above Malakbael at the heart of two entire task forces' worth of void ships. Other full task forces had been assigned to the hothouse jungle world of Malakra, the industrial megaplanet of Malakvar, and ice-locked Malakshet with its geothermal agri-caverns. Meanwhile, Task Force X – under the swashbuckling Groupmaster Ira Threnodar – had been broken into smaller intercept groups and now patrolled the system, ready to respond swiftly to any threat or call for aid. The majority of the battle group's ground forces had been set to garrisoning the major population centres on Malakbael – itself until recently a

backwater shrine world – and the immense Fortress of Light that had been raised around the Choral Engine.

Taking advantage of the Engine's radiance and its warp-calming influence, dozens of task forces converged upon the Malak System. Mere days after Fleetmaster Abcondis ordered the astropathic sendings, the first warships slid through the meniscus of realspace and sped in-system with data-pennants streaming and guns unshrouded. Admiral Aquilant Ignacious Pell led three task forces of Battle Group Betaris from aboard his Mars-class flagship *Cry of Wrath*. Groupmster Zavadan Mael had come in person aboard his Dictator-class cruiser *Incendor*, with four task forces from Battle Group Dominus in train. Led by the battle barge *Song of Sorrows*, the compliment from Battle Group Forthrax thundered out of the void, commanded by Chapter Master Yosharo DuGal himself.

Still they came, ever more Imperial reinforcements flooding the Malak System until it resembled Fleet Quartus' original mustering grounds. Canoness Verity Kade of the Order of the Argent Shroud led the complement from Battle Group Irasmus, having established her command sanctum aboard the Dauntless-class light cruiser *Mercy in Death*. Groupmaster Persepha Xeng and her ancient Nemesis-class fleet carrier *Bountiful Hate* came at the head of no less than five task forces from Battle Group Jovia. Groupmaster Josiah Bolsett III of Battle Group Kilox arrived amidst hymns and fanfare, his swift Mercury-class *Warhawk* leading two large task forces to join the throng.

With each new reinforcing formation, Fleetmaster Abcondis worked tirelessly to welcome, brief, integrate and redeploy warships, support vessels and vast land armies. He assigned many elements to the defence of the four worlds, ensuring each had a commander of groupmaster level to watch over it. He swelled Threnodar's patrol fleet with fresh task forces until it rivalled a battle group in its own strength. He even assigned elements of Battle Group Forthrax to watch over the Malakandrias asteroid belt in the system's so-called Barren Reach, ensuring no heretic attackers could use the tumbling debris field to approach unseen. The force defending the Malak System was soon nothing short of colossal, its concentrated might such that it seemed almost absurd. With each fresh wave of ships and soldiery the fleetmaster felt a little more secure, a little more prepared to face the dread threat prophesied by the Grey Knights.

Brother-Captain Cromm had conducted his interview with Lady Emagna and found her case sufficiently compelling to stay his hand, at least until the coming battle had been fought. He had then returned to his strike cruiser to lead his warriors in pre-battle rites. Cromm hoped to scry further insights regarding the onrushing threat.

Lady Emagna herself had been initially alarmed at the appearance of the Grey Knights. Though not tainted by heresy, and believing herself a dyed-in-the-wool puritan, even a fanatic like Emagna could not mistake the questionable nature of the technologies she had awoken on Malakbael. She was also conscious of the covert wars her agents had waged – both to suppress what she had taken as the baseless scaremongering by rival Inquisitors about what they called her empyric signal fire, and to remotely facilitate the rituals of heretic cults throughout several sub-sectors that attracted the warp storms that had becalmed Fleet Quartus. Emagna knew that, from what she considered certain limited perspectives, her hands were stained with Imperial blood. Upon discovering that the Grey Knights had not come to punish her, but instead to warn of a threat to the Choral Engine, Emagna was fired anew with zeal. Now came the true test of the worth of her work. Surely, she told herself, this was the tempering that her heretic rivals had sought to prevent from ever taking place. Once the Grey Knights had returned to their ship, Lady Emagna set about reinforcing the spiritual wards throughout the Fortress of Light. If the heretic invaders made it to the surface of Malakbael, she would see them all burn for attempting to dim the righteous light of what she firmly believed was the God-Emperor's Choral Engine.

Hours passed as Imperial adepts watched their auspexes for any sign of invaders. Those hours became first one day Malak-standard, then two, then three. Still there came no sign of attack. After a full week Malak-standard, Fleetmaster Abcondis knew doubtful whispers would be circulating. Why had he amassed so immense a force only for it to sit idle? How long would overtaxed supplies of food and fuel for such an over-concentration of forces last, even with the fleet's robust resupply chain? Why had these warriors been pulled away from their war zones and comrades when they could have remained and fought real enemies for the God-Emperor? Abcondis and his subordinates ordered strict regimens of drill and prayer to keep their forces occupied, but still doubt tried to creep into Abcondis' heart. Had he overreacted? Had the Grey Knights been wrong?

He was almost relieved when, on the seventh hour of the eighth day since the muster concluded, a large heretic warfleet burst from the warp on the edge of the Malak System.

'There is no challenge that cannot be overcome through sufficient faith in the God-Emperor. There is no act of devotion nor worshipful deed from which the loyal servant should shrink. It is our purity of purpose that sanctifies our actions, and no matter by what means the witch or the heretic may attempt to pervert our designs, their own inherent corruption will lead them into failure and damnation time and time again.'

- Inquisitor Glori Emagna, excerpt from her address to the garrison of the Fortress of Light

INTO THE FIRE

The *Stygian Heart* and its accompanying Balefleet tore their way into realspace in tight formation and accelerated to attack speed. If the heretics were daunted by the immense forces arrayed against them, their actions gave no hint. Arcing up from the system's underbelly came a fleet large enough to conquer an entire sector. A spearhead of monstrous battleships and mutated grand cruisers surrounded the leviathan immensity of the *Stygian Heart,* while swarms of smaller escort vessels and ship-sized Daemon Engines spread out around them. Their attack vector was swiftly cogitated as angling straight for Malakbael, paying no heed to the system's other planets.

Under normal circumstances, the arrival of such an invading force would have spread panic and terror. Instead, calm orders flashed through the loyalist vox-net and travelled by las-blurt from one fleet element to the next. Engines flared and miles-long gothic warships slid silently into formation, their auspicators painting the heretic fleet from myriad angles. Hymnals swelled through gun decks and boomed from laud hailers as crews bent to their tasks. On the worlds of the Malak System, defenders readied their weapons with steely-eyed confidence, buoyed by early reports that, while the invaders' numbers were great, they were no match for the strength arrayed against them.

Fleetmaster Abcondis stood straight-backed upon the bridge of the *Honour of Terra*, hands clasped behind him, face impassive as he watched the primary vid-screens. He had no need to issue orders; his subordinates knew their parts in his plan. Abcondis' direction would be required only should something unexpected occur upon a grand scale, and he knew better than to micromanage. Thus he was simply an observer as Groupmasters Threnodar and Xeng led task forces from Battle Groups Alphae, Dominus and Jovia on an intercept course. He observed task forces detach themselves from the defence fleets hanging above Malakvar, Malakshet and Malakbael, moving in as a second wave whose job would be to deliver the killing blow once the first wave had slowed the foe and split their formation.

Abcondis remained stony-faced as the first shoals of torpedoes filled the void, spat from the launch tubes of invaders and defenders both. He watched the glyphs that indicated lance exchanges, ship damage and attack craft swarms. Experience told him the foe had come in fast and clever, exploiting the loyalists' need to defend every world in the system in a way that alleviated – to some degree at least – the immense disparity in numbers. With Malakvar at the nadir of its orbit, and Malakra's alignment such that loyalist vessels had to skirt its gravitic wake, some of Abcondis' forces would be slow to join the fight, while others were too far away to be of any use. The traitors' fire patterns suggested veteran gun crews and wily shipmasters with thousands of years' experience of naval combat.

None of it was enough to stay the fury of Fleet Quartus. Thousands of torpedoes converged upon the heretics, a rain of ordnance so dense that auspex screens turned solid red with overlapping runes. Remote vid-feeds allowed Abcondis to observe as heretic escorts shuddered and then broke up under impact after impact. He saw lance beams cut apart giant Daemon Engines, or core them out from prow to stern and leave them drifting in the void, shaking with internal explosions.

The larger heretic craft fought with skill and ferocity. Abcondis' brow furrowed slightly as he saw them slay one Imperial ship after another and perform ever more complex evasive manoeuvres. Their every action seemed calculated to push nearer to Malakbael while also buying time. It was as though they were waiting for something, he thought, the observation spurring him to order even his most remote flotillas to high alert. Fleetmaster Abcondis would be damned to the warp before he allowed complacency to leave him open to heretic trickery.

For all their cunning, however, the heretics' efforts appeared futile. Abcondis watched Void Claws Space Marines lead massed boarding parties to scuttle a Desecrator-class battleship bearing the colours of the Red Corsairs. Only minutes later, a revoltingly mutated Repulsive-class vessel broke apart under thunderous broadsides from Ira Threnodar's own *Resplendent* and a trio of Tempest-class frigates.

Minute by minute the strategic picture tilted ever further in favour of the loyalist defenders. With the second Imperial wave fully committed and the heretic formation shattered, it was not long before the last few enemy capital ships were either wrecked or attempting to flee, and only the deformed immensity of the space hulk still pressed on towards Malakbael. Abcondis' brow smoothed at last. He drew breath to order the final attack on the hulk, and to give a stand-down order throughout the rest of the system. He even considered hailing the *Unrelenting* to suggest to Brother-Captain Cromm that his warning had been somewhat alarmist. Then came the cries from the auspicator pits, and the first shocked vox reports from adepts observing the system's outer reaches. In seconds, everything changed.

THE MALAK SYSTEM

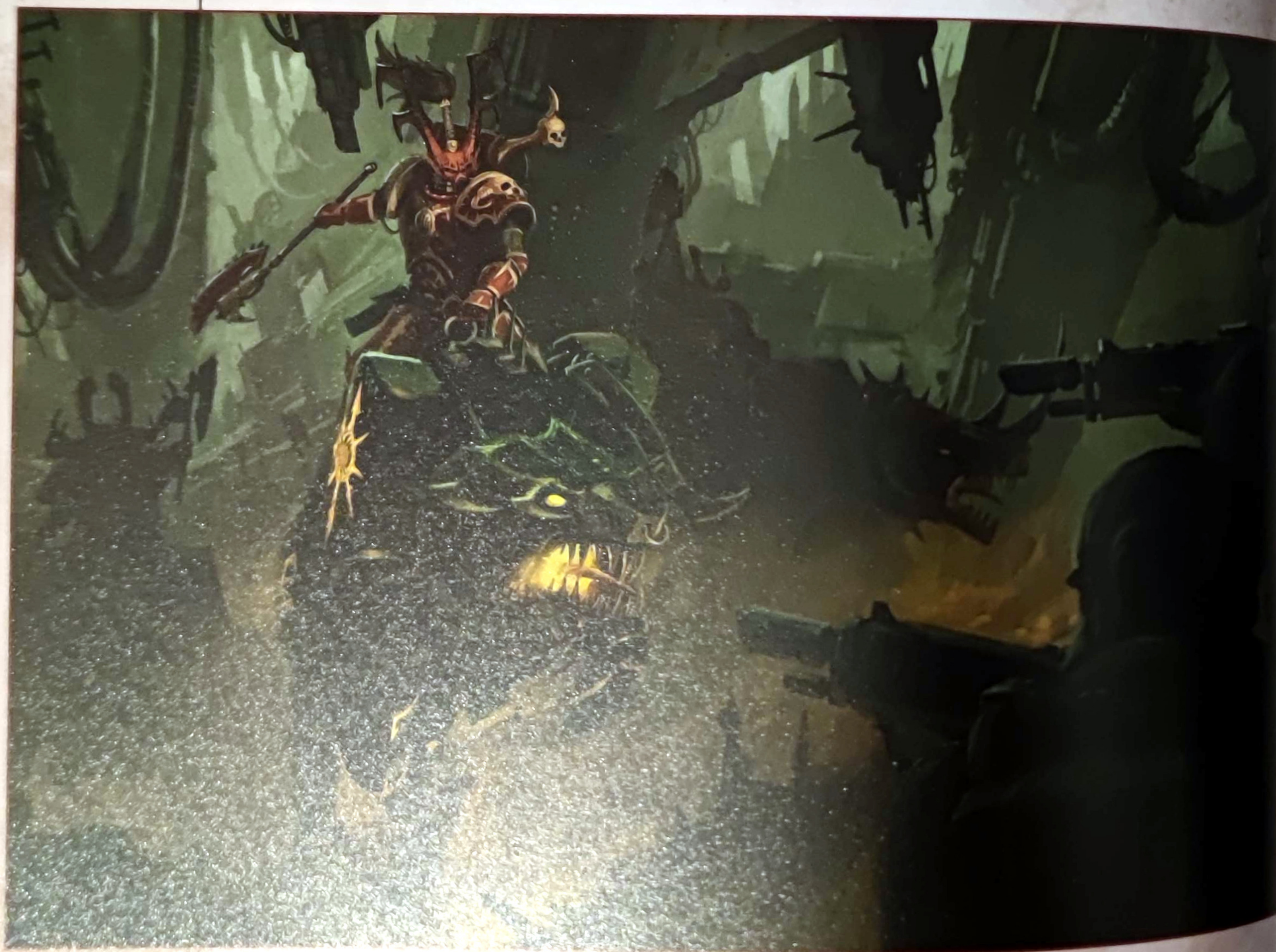
Considering its unremarkable place within the Imperium, the Malak System boasted impressive fortifications. This was thanks in part to Saint Gedwael the Builder, a former planetary governor of Malakvar now celebrated by many of the shrines on Malakbael. His machinations in early M37 had led to the building of formidable fortresses, massive orbital defence laser silos, a coordinated intra-system vox network and several deep-void augur stations across the worlds of the Malak System. Fleetmaster Abcondis had ordered these facilities assessed and expanded after the awakening of the Choral Engine. Though their labours were not complete by the time the heretic invaders reached the system, Fleet Quartus' tech-magi successfully augmented the existing defences of all four planets. Each world was now more than capable of accommodating massive garrison forces, and of staving off all but the most determined planetary invasions. Not for nothing had the system gained the nickname 'the Fortress of the Fourth' amongst its defenders.

++ KILL! MAIM! BURN! KILL! MAIM! BURN! KILL! MAIM! BURN! ++

THE MALAK ONSLAUGHT

One moment the psykers and Astropaths wired into the Choral Engine were shuddering and groaning, eyes rolled back to show the whites, ectoplasm writhing about them in lazy tendrils. The next, they had broken into a deafening cacophony of terrified screams interspersed with howling and raving about the Red Angel, storms of boiling blood, and a blade of impossible size splitting the heavens to sunder worlds.

Lady Glori Emagna was praying to the God-Emperor within the command sanctum of the Choral Engine when the screaming began. She heard and understood the name that tore itself from hundreds of distended maws. She recognised in that instant that her rivals had warned of this very doom while she had accused them of heresy for their words. Yet Lady Emagna had not achieved all she had through self-doubt. Here, she believed, was a blessing from the God-Emperor, a test worthy of her magnificent Choral Engine. Even as others reeled in shock and confusion, Lady Emagna rapped out orders to prepare the fortress' defences, to rouse the orbital laser silos, and to send out a warning to every ship in the system that a lord amongst daemons had come to offer them the battle of their lives.



Fleetmaster Abcondis was quietly satisfied. His officers had acquitted themselves admirably, and their crews had followed suit. There had been a certain beauty, he thought, in the fiery ballet of destruction that had seen the heretic fleet drawn in and picked apart. The monstrous space hulk was still fighting, but surrounded and hopelessly outnumbered it surely wouldn't last long.

'My lord, I have priority missives for you.' The Master of Vox had broken protocol by hastening to the fleetmaster's side in person, but one look at her expression told Abcondis now was not the time for reproach.

'Who?' he asked.

'Lady Emagna and, separately, Brother-Captain Cromm,' she said. Abcondis blinked. He drew breath to enquire further, but was distracted by the ripple of alarm spreading across the bridge of his ship. Officers rose from their stations, uttered oaths, shouted to one another while gesticulating at screens. Abcondis' confusion deepened into alarm at the sight of his hand-picked veterans apparently lurching towards panic. And then it came, a deafening roar erupting with bone-shaking force from the very air around him.

'BLOOD FOR THE BLOOD GOD!'

Aboard the *Unrelenting*, Brother-Captain Cromm and his brothers saw their silvered divining mirrors crack and begin to bleed. The wards inscribed throughout their warship, across their armour, even inked into their very flesh, all blazed into holy light at once. Feeling a pounding pain in his skull unlike anything he had ever known, Cromm realised that the true threat was about to make itself known. His ship had taken no part in the fight against the *Stygian Heart* and its fleet, for the battle had not merited the Grey Knights' involvement. Now, though, Cromm ordered a warning sent to Fleetmaster Abcondis and the *Unrelenting* brought to full battle readiness. This time they would be sorely needed.

Neither Emagna's warning nor that of the Grey Knights came in time to aid the Imperial cause. The light of the beacon and the calming of the warp was as useful to the World Eaters as to their foes. Coupled with the reckless aggression with which they piloted their warships, it allowed their armada to erupt from the warp with shocking suddenness. Imperial auspex-adepts hunched aghast over their screens, calling out first dozens, then hundreds, then thousands of hostile contacts. Augur screens were soon awash with so many crimson threat runes that they appeared drenched with gore. Their shocked faces underlit by the infernal red glow, the adepts kept up their mantra of doom as they tried to keep up with the torrent of heretic warships pouring into the northern fringes of the Malak System. The size of the renegade fleet was like something from darkest myth. Soon, not a loyalist warrior in the system could escape the dread realisation that they, and not their enemies, were now the ones outnumbered.

THE TRIDENT'S PRONGS

Looming amidst the hellish environs of the *Conqueror*'s bridge, Angron considered his strategy. He was distracted, not only by the hammering of the Butcher's Nails, but also by the radiance of the Choral Engine. From the moment his ship translated into realspace, Angron felt as though he stood within a blast furnace whose invisible fires scorched his flesh to blackened parchment. Lesser entities might have recoiled. Angron, hardened by an eternity of agony, felt only the furious desire to douse that sorcerous beacon in an ocean of gore.

For all his damnation, Angron was still a Primarch. His broken mind could still absorb strategic information at a spectacular rate. Moreover, while he might be a berserk engine of destruction, Angron was no fool. He cared less for the lives of his followers than he did for his own hateful existence, but he recognised their strength as a weapon he could wield to achieve his ends. The Red Angel appraised in moments the masterful Imperial defensive disposition, and the way that deployment had been pulled out of true by the attack of some unknown third force. Angron cared nothing for the fools who had preceded him into battle, but he recognised the strategic advantage they had handed him. He issued his orders in monosyllabic snarls, swiftly setting in motion a plan as simple and direct as it was ideal for the task at hand.

The Khornate armada would attack in three prongs, like a thrusting trident. The first prong formed around the *Clarion Dire* Balefleet and tore away towards Malakra. This would be a feint to force that world's defenders to dig in, expecting attack. It might even draw reinforcements from Malakvar. Yet the first prong would not engage these enemies, but instead use Malakra's gravity well to slingshot themselves recklessly through the enemy lines before powering in towards Malakbael. The second prong, led by the World Eaters battle barge *Exsanguinator*, climbed rapidly above the plane of Malakbael's ecliptic. Its

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Only a mad or reckless shipmaster would risk translating from the warp beyond a system's Mandeville point, for to do so chances emerging within a planet or star and thus suffering a truly horrible end.

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route would bring it down through the fringes of the Malakandrias asteroid belt to assault Malakbael's defences head-on. Angron and the *Conqueror* led the third prong, arcing perilously close to the star Malak itself before powering up from below Malakbael's ecliptic in a killing thrust intended to rip through the beleaguered Imperial defenders and strike the world itself.

DUTY AND DEATH

The loyalist response throughout the system was swift, but varied wildly from panic to grim determination. Every living being in the Malak System had heard Angron's ferocious war cry. Even if they had no notion of the situation in the void and no context for the sound, its supernatural fury filled them with instinctive terror. Astra Militarum forces garrisoning planetside defences quailed, their Commissars' bolt pistols barking again and again as they sought to restore order. Mindless panic spread through labour gangs in the bowels of Imperial warships, triggering several bloody riots and temporarily crippling the operation of enginariums and gun decks as discipline officers were forced to wade in with whips and goads.

Those exposed to the raw spectacle of the World Eaters armada had even greater reason for fear. Yet it was to the credit of Fleet Quartus that, for every ship's bridge or augur station that experienced panicked paralysis, there were many others where duty and faith overcame fear, the focused chatter of martial industry replacing cries of alarm.

For his part, Fleetmaster Abcondis responded to the new threat with alacrity. Indeed, the fleetmaster realised only now that some part of him had been waiting for a second and far greater danger to materialise, and was ready to face it head-on. Abcondis' clipped orders radiated out through the intra-system vox network, increasing in pace and complexity as strategium adepts and tactical cogitators aboard the *Honour of Terra* provided him with swift analysis and advice. First in ones and twos, then in entire formations, the loyalist warships came about and reformed. As they did, Groupmaster Threnodar was forced to abandon her pursuit of the *Stygian Heart,* the damaged Ark of Omen seizing the opportunity to limp away trailing flame and debris.

For all their discipline, the Imperial defenders were still badly out of position. Many World Eaters ships had burst from the warp dangerously far beyond the system's safe Mandeville point, allowing them to bear down upon their victims with perilous speed. Moreover, Groupmasters Threnodar and Xeng had drawn off many of the system's defence reserves in their fight against the *Stygian Heart.* Coupled with the fact that Fleetmaster Abcondis had heavily prioritised the localised defence of Malakbael, this meant that the worlds of Malakra and Malakvar had only two task forces apiece to defend them. Meanwhile, only a single task force of Battle Group Forthrax lurked within the fringes of the Malakandrias belt.

In normal circumstances, such concentrations of martial might would have been sufficient. Against the avalanche of Khornate warships now thundering in system, it was anything but. Amongst the first casualties were Task Force VI of Battle Group Forthrax. Knowing the consequences of cowardice and taking heart at the presence of Void Talons Space Marines amongst their ranks, these desperate warriors sought to conduct a hit-and-run defence against the *Exsanguinator* and its fleet. Under the command of Void Talons Captain Ugoshi, the loyalists hoped to use the asteroids as cover, ambushing and boarding heretic ships where possible while luring larger vessels into the belt where they might be outmanoeuvred and slain.

Their efforts were tragically futile. So vast was the weight of heretic firepower that many of the task force's ships were hammered apart the moment they emerged from the asteroid belt. Boarding actions nonetheless struck home against several heretic ships and saw a squadron of Militarum Traitoris troop ships scuttled. Yet where the Void Talons boarded World Eaters craft they were met by frenzied counter-charges that drove them back and trapped them in their bridgeheads. Captain Ugoshi himself was slain in one such desperate fight, hacked apart by raging Berzerkers after cutting down more than a dozen foes. A handful of the Daemon Prince Dreagh'or's warships took the bait presented to them and pursued loyalist lures into the asteroid belt, there to be destroyed. But given the heretics' vast numbers such losses were trivial. When the *Exsanguinator* murdered the Void Talons strike cruiser *Noble Blade* with thunderous broadsides then led the way on towards Malakbael, Task Force VI's defiance fragmented.

On the far side of the Malak System, the *Clarion Dire* spearhead bore down upon the jungle world of Malakra with suicidal speed. The planet's defenders were under the command of Admiral Aquilant Ignacious Pell, one of Battle Group Betaris' most decorated heroes. Wired into his servo throne on the bridge of his Mars-class cruiser *Cry of Wrath*, Pell hastily weighed his options. Fleetmaster Abcondis had ordered him to blunt the enemy's assault along this vector by whatever means necessary. To do that, Pell knew he would need considerably greater forces than those at his disposal. The question he wrestled with was whether, by calling those

'Warriors of the Imperium. Faithful servants of the God-Emperor. Brave soldiers of Fleet Quartus. I know you. I know your strength, your courage and your tenacity. I know that in the face of this new threat you will not quail or falter. I know that you shall stand tall as I stand tall, fight as I fight, and prevail no matter the odds. Let them send a galaxy's worth of heretics against us. Together we will slay them all, and in the sight of the God-Emperor of Mankind we will claim today the victory we deserve!'

- Fleetmaster Abcondis

reinforcements in, he would be giving himself a chance to deny the enemy Malakra, or playing into their hands by pulling ships away from Malakbael.

Ultimately, Pell knew he had to obey his orders to the best of his ability, and that meant requesting urgent reinforcement. He had dispatched two entire task forces to aid in the destruction of the *Stygian Heart*; these he now recalled with all haste. Even as their shipmasters brought their craft about and raced back towards Malakra, more reinforcements under Canoness Verity Kade were breaking orbit above Malakshet. The zealous Canoness was only too eager to join the fight. Due to its remote orbit, the frozen world lay furthest away from the invaders, and Kade had no intention of remaining an ineffectual bystander while her allies fought and were martyred in the God-Emperor's name. She stripped three full task forces from Malakshet, leaving only those formations that could mobilise swiftly enough to garrison the world's bunkers and agri-caverns. Kade's spearhead would not reach Malakra before the invaders, but her intention was to fall upon them like a thunderbolt once they were fully embroiled against Pell's flotilla.

With mere minutes to spare until the traitor ships came within weapons range, Pell's recalled task forces arrived, more than doubling his numbers. The Malakra defence fleet was still outnumbered, but not so sorely that they could not hold until Canoness Kade joined the fight. Imperial warships spread out across the void, cogitating firing solutions as their decks rang with prayer. Down on the surface, loyalist infantry performed final ammunition checks and muttered litanies of arming as they watched the skies. Admiral Aquilant Pell waited for his foes to divide into assault groups and begin their attack runs, perhaps even seeking to open gaps through which dropships could make for Malakra's surface. He frowned in consternation as the heretic ships kept coming, showing no sign of adopting attack formations but instead pursuing flight paths that would carry them dangerously close to Malakra's atmosphere. He wondered for a moment if the heretics intended simply to assault the world without first engaging his defence fleet – a suicidal proposition – or worse, were going to crash headlong into Malakra. His eyes widened in shock as he suddenly perceived their plan.

Pell's orders rang out through his flotilla, for all ships to open fire at once and move onto intercept courses. Lance batteries flared. Torpedoes surged eagerly from launch tubes as swarms of attack craft and bombers streaked from embarkation decks. Realspace engines flared crimson in the void as the widely spaced Imperial vessels sought to tighten up and block their enemies' paths. Yet the distances involved in void warfare are vast, and the forces of inertia and gravitic pull inescapable. The Khornate ships tore through the void at breakneck speed and plunged willingly into the grip of Malakra's gravitic well, allowing it to seize them and swing them about on its axis.

It would have been a high-risk manoeuvre even for a single small ship under controlled conditions. Here, the heretics thundered in en masse with all guns blazing, caring nothing for the Imperial warships scattered in their path. Some, raked by battery fire and pierced by lance beams, veered off their trajectories and were dragged down into the Malakran atmosphere. These vessels crashed down as flaming wreckage upon the luckless defenders, annihilating hundreds of miles of jungle and fortifications as they smashed into the planet's surface. Other warships collided with the loyalist vessels attempting to interdict, their blood-mad shipmasters breaking formation in order to bring their blade-like ramming prows into action. Ships of both sides were torn asunder, screaming crews vomited out into the killing void even as billowing firestorms erupted from the tumbling masses of wreckage that had once been warships. The *Clarion Dire* ran down a squadron of Sword-class escorts, smashing them with its colossal bulk without even losing speed. Wild exchanges of fire flashed between the two fleets as they passed through one another's lines. Void shields collapsed under pummelling volleys; reactor shrines and magazines detonated like miniature stars as lucky shots found them; boarding torpedoes streaked through the void only to miss their targets and bear their doomed passengers down to flaming death in Malakra's atmosphere.

As suddenly as the slaughter had begun, it tailed off. The *Clarion Dire* and the majority of its spearhead had slingshotted themselves through the Imperial lines and on towards Malakbael. In their wake they left a mauled Imperial flotilla still trying to manoeuvre and come about to pursue. Half of Malakra itself was now a raging firestorm strewn with apocalyptic blast craters. A handful of the most rabid Khornate shipmasters had broken formation and remained to board and harass the surviving Imperial vessels. Indeed, only a timely teleport strike by Ultramarines Terminators from the strike cruiser *Prandium* had prevented a boarding party of World Eaters from slaying Admiral Pell himself.

Furious and dismayed, Pell sent a warning to Canoness Kade that she should change heading at once and make for Malakbael. His forces would pursue as soon as they had extricated

THE CLARION DIRE

Lord Karakka Bloodfist was a World Eater of the most bestial and degenerate sort, a gore-caked barbarian who ruled over his warband as a murderous tyrant. Upon taking mastery of the *Clarion Dire* he swiftly set to work transforming the immense conjoined vessel into a space-borne nightmare of Khornate shrines, gladiatorial fighting pits and primally savage hunting grounds. Many of his warriors plunged again and again into the space hulk's deepest and darkest reaches to pit themselves against the monstrous denizens of those benighted realms. Bloodfist, for his part, revelled in the indiscriminate slaughter.

Void war in the Age of the Imperium blends advanced technology with anachronism and stagnant thinking. So it is that colossally powerful vessels able to leap between star systems still employ vast gangs of serfs to haul shells to gun batteries by main force, rely in places upon brass speaker-tubes to communicate from deck to deck, and are ill-understood and superstitiously viewed by those who sail aboard them.

themselves from the wreckage field above Malakra, but they would never now catch the heretic spearhead before it reached its true prize.

STARCLASH

Fleetmaster Abcondis had amassed no less than eight task forces around Malakbael, a muster more than equal to any one of the onrushing heretic spearheads. He knew, however, that should all three converge upon his command at once there would be no stopping them. He was counting on Pell to slow and disrupt the spearhead above Malakra. That still left the other two attacking formations – one arcing in from the fringes of the Malakandrias asteroid belt, the other on a direct attack course surging up from below the ecliptic. Antique threat recognition augurs buried in the cogitators of Abcondis' vessel chimed warning tolls upon detecting the *Conqueror*, classifying it as a vermillion-class alpha-prime threat. That decided him. Abcondis acceded to the increasingly vehement demands from Groupmaster Threnodar that he let her and her interdiction group off the leash. She and Groupmaster Xeng were to lead the full might of their system patrol force – less those vessels too badly damaged during the battle with the *Stygian Heart* – on an intercept course. They were to interdict the *Conqueror* and its spearhead and ensure that, in Abcondis' words, 'that evil-looking abomination never comes within ten thousand miles of Malakbael'.

Rallying their ships from the battle against the *Stygian Heart*, Threnodar and Xeng set off at full burn with the strength of almost seven task forces at their command. It was a mighty counter-attack, counting amongst its ranks proud warships of the Navis Imperialis, the White Scars, Imperial Fists and Howling Griffons Chapters, and the Adeptus Mechanicus of several forge worlds. If it had been left to continue crusading across the stars, such a force could have liberated dozens of star systems and purged countless foes of Mankind. Instead, lit by the roiling radiance of Malak's hellish corona, it slammed headlong into the warfleet of Angron.

Carnage erupted across the void on a grand scale as the two fleets met. The World Eaters and their allies had the numerical advantage, even over this massive Imperial flotilla, but Threnodar and Xeng led the more disciplined force. Many of the World Eaters' warships fought like rabid canids, oblivious to one another and to the wider conflict as they sought to chase down and savage one victim after another. Working in concert, Imperial shipmasters were able to lure the heretic vessels into killing zones, before conducting evasive manoeuvres and picking their enraged quarry apart with long-ranged volleys. The Desecrator-class battleship *Gouger* was slain in this fashion, as was the Hades-class *Murderlust* and the Retaliator-class grand cruiser *Deathblow*, which had once vomited fire down upon Terra itself during Horus' last great roll of the dice.

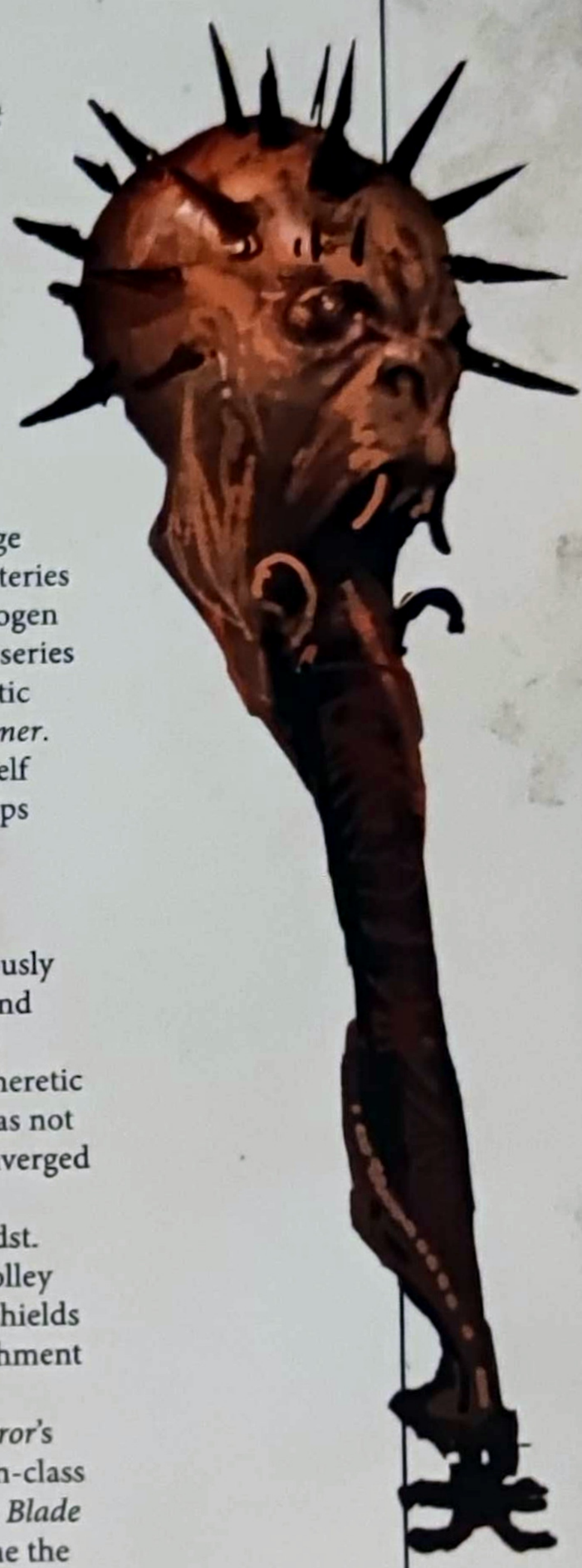
As the heretics' formation fragmented, so the Space Marine vessels lunged into the gaps and launched punishing boarding actions. Codicier Vorn Dylas of the Imperial Fists led a deck-by-deck action that saw his warriors seize the bridge of the *Bloodied Fang* and turn its lance batteries upon its unsuspecting escort frigates. Hibogen Khan led his White Scars in a courageous series of gunship-borne raids to cripple the heretic strike cruisers *Hound's Maw* and *Skullclaimer*. Meanwhile, Groupmaster Threnodar herself led a formation of three Imperial battleships – including her own *Resplendent* – to kill the *Conqueror*.

The loyalist onslaught had been tremendously effective, employing every ounce of skill and courage shown by shipmasters, crews and boarding forces alike to badly maul their heretic foes. A battle against Angron, however, was not so easily won. As the three battleships converged upon the *Conqueror*, the heretic flagship powered suddenly forwards into their midst. Like a grizzled gladiator it shrugged off volley after volley of fire, supernaturally potent shields and scarred hull absorbing colossal punishment both from its own opponents and other opportunist Imperial vessels. The *Conqueror*'s own guns spat fury, wounding the Oberon-class *Veracity* and forcing the already damaged *Blade Aquilant* to abort its attack run. Then came the Ursus Claws, harpoons of colossal size punching through the hull of the *Resplendent* to drag it inexorably closer. It was at this moment that the Red Angel took to the wing.

BUTCHERY

Angron had been waiting impatiently for the enemy to come into range, dimly aware of the reports flooding in of bloodshed and battle throughout the system. The closer he drew to the psychic inferno on Malakbael, the more it dominated his thoughts. By the time Groupmasters Threnodar and Xeng led their counter-attack against his spearhead, Angron was half-mad with rage and pain, and beyond giving cogent orders. Angron's bridge crew knew their business, however, and it was slaughter.

Realising his vessel was now plunging like a blade into the very heart of the foe's formation, Angron let battle-wrath take him. He smashed aside the bridge bulkhead doors then tore his way up through the structure of the *Conqueror*



like a beast tearing free of a trap. Alarms howled and emergency blast doors slammed down in his wake. Oblivious, the Red Angel pounded through an airlock and out into space.

Angron was greeted by the raging fury of the void war. The star Malak blazed overhead, so close that he could see flares and arches of plasma rising lazily from its surface to lash the void. Malak's furious glare threw weird patterns of light and shadow across the warring ships and rendered many as hazy silhouettes. Yet to Angron's supernatural senses, the star burning on Malakbael was brighter and hotter by far. He felt as though it should have been blasting the flesh from his brazen bones and tearing his mind apart with its screaming choir. Angron writhed and howled in agony until the pounding of the Butcher's Nails and his own fury drove him into action.

Those ships that fought upon the fringes of Malak's corona would ever after be recognisable by a strange energy signature that tainted their vox signals and warp drive emissions.

Angron saw the huge Imperial battleship that was being reeled inexorably in by the Ursus Claws. The vessel was still firing, it and the *Conqueror* hammering each other point-blank as they closed. Angron gave vent to a howl of wrath that carried impossibly through the void, then dove like a torpedo. He was caught by a lance blast and torn almost in half, only for his supernatural body to reform in seconds. He plunged onward. Next, a virtual cliff-face of baroque metalwork slid between him and his target as an Imperial frigate swept in, apparently trying to cut the Ursus Claws' chains with a desperate ramming manoeuvre. Roaring with fury, Angron plunged through the ship's battery fire, his metaphysical rage igniting into a meteoric blaze around him. Wings tucked tight, blades held forward, wreathed in infernal fire, Angron hit the ship's port flank head-on. Driven by his hateful daemonic will and in defiance of physical laws, he ripped through hull plating, decking, vital systems, magazines and screaming Human forms before erupting from the frigate's starboard side. Explosions and spinning debris fountained out after him, flailing figures dragged into the dark by violent depressurisation. The frigate shuddered with secondary explosions and veered off course. It strayed into the *Conqueror*'s forward field of fire and was sliced apart by lance beams. Angron plunged on towards the ensnared battleship.

A final blizzard of defensive fire engulfed Angron as the *Resplendent* threw everything it had in his direction. He was blown apart and recorporealised in a gory halo, only to be blasted apart again. Aboard the bridge of the *Resplendent*, Ira Threnodar ordered her crew to confirm the kill. She prowled her command balcony, hand on the basket hilt of her power sabre, scowl thunderous. Officers relayed reports from across the ship of worsening battle damage, system overloads, machine spirit corruption, incoming boarding torpedoes, and the continuing impossibility of dislodging the vast harpoons that had pierced the prow. All paled in comparison, she knew, to ensuring that the monster in the void was truly dead.

Then came an inhuman bellow of rage, tearing from thin air as every screen and readout on the bridge turned blood red. An inferno erupted from the strategos pit at the heart of the bridge, the screams of burning adepts and servitors drowned out by the roar of flames that became a ferocious voice bellowing infernal oaths. Angron rose from amidst the fires, blades in hand, and hurled himself upon Threnodar's crew. Jaw set, the groupmaster drew her blade even as her subordinates fled screaming, and prepared – despite her near paralysing terror – to die with honour.

The shape of the wider battle changed as the crippled *Resplendent* died in the *Conqueror*'s embrace. Not only had the Imperial patrol group's flagship and its most charismatic leader fallen, but also the World Eaters' numbers, ferocity and veteran martial skill were starting to tell. The twinned Despoiler battleships *Slaughter* and *Harvest* muscled their way into the rent torn by the *Conqueror* and vomited flocks of Heldrakes and swarms of Dreadclaw boarding pods. These engulfed the *Veracity*, battle raging across the battleship's hull and through its decks as hosts of Berzerkers, blood cultists and Daemon Engines tore apart ranks of armsmen and tech-magi. Meanwhile, for each successful bait-and-slay manoeuvre the loyalist ships performed, another was fouled by attack runs from World Eaters vessels now surging around the edges of the engagement zone. The *Munificence*, the *Lord Solar*, the venerable *Manifest Menace* and even the White Scars battle barge *Steed of Kumblai* died as their engines were crippled, their gun decks set ablaze, and their bridges and enginariums seized by murderous boarding troops. Angron's rampage swept on from one ship to the next. He shrugged off hurricanes of fire and left a trail of bloody havoc in his wake.

BREAKTHROUGH

Seeing the battle turning sharply against her forces, and conscious that delay would let the World Eaters surround her battered flotilla, Groupmaster Xeng ordered the retreat. Guns blazing, the surviving loyalist ships threw themselves into evasive manoeuvres and sought to disengage. Some escaped successfully. Others, encircled by packs of ravening heretic warships or overrun by Khornate boarding parties, had to be abandoned to their fates. Landing amidst the gothic spires of the *Conqueror*, Angron bellowed with wrath as his forces gave chase. Any too damaged to keep pace, or still engaged in brawls with wounded Imperial ships, were left behind. Sheer bloodlust drove the World Eaters on, the thrusters of their vessels blazing, plasma reactors thundering at the limits of their tolerance as their shipmasters urged more and more speed. Malakbael and the Choral Engine lay dead ahead, surrounded by the flashes and flares of a ferocious void battle already in full swing.

While battle raged around Malak Star, the *Exsanguinator* and its attendant fleet had assaulted the defences around Malakbael. Rather than allow the attackers to dictate the battle, Fleetmaster Abcondis sent Task Forces Alphae II and Irasmus VII out on wide flanking arcs, while Groupmaster Bolsett bravely led a screening force from Task Force Kilox II up to meet the enemy front runners. With their formation already strung out from the fighting around the Malakandrias asteroids, the heretic warships were susceptible to Abcondis' plan. Their foremost elements engaged Bolsett's force without support, suffering a number of damaged or destroyed vessels. As Task Forces Alphae II and Irasmus VII pincered in from the flanks, so Bolsett and his ships fell back. The loyalist flanking formations swept through the onrushing heretics, exploiting their loose dispersal and knocking out more craft with punishing broadsides and volleys of torpedoes. Then they too disengaged, luring squadrons of World Eaters ships away from the main attack as they went.

Abcondis' strategy robbed Dreagh'or's force of ships and momentum. Yet it could not halt the attack entirely, and this now fell in a series of pummelling hammer blows against the massed Imperial forces defending Malakbael's outer orbital zones. Loyalist warships, defence platforms and planetside weapons silos unleashed an intricately plotted storm of fire that eviscerated one heretic ship after another. Still the *Exsanguinator* thundered on, diving and rolling through the engagement zone with dozens of traitor warships following its lead. Defence platforms shuddered and broke apart under sustained bombardment. Warships of both sides tumbled ablaze through the void. Entire armies fought back-and-forth boarding wars through corridors and chambers that echoed with gunfire and screams.

Then the Grey Knights' *Unrelenting* leapt forward on a cone of fire to engage the *Exsanguinator* head-on, Abcondis and Chapter Master DuGal joining their flagships to the sudden counter-attack. The battle for Malakbael might have been won in that moment, the loyalists finishing one foe before they had to turn and face the next. Yet too soon, Angron and his spearhead struck, scattering the last of Groupmaster Xeng's ships before them as they came. The *Conqueror* plunged into the heart of the Imperial defences like an impaling blade. Its own escort vessels followed, bloodied but unbowed, spreading out and worrying at the loyalist formations like ripfish in a feeding frenzy.

Chapter Master DuGal rallied several task forces to meet the newcomers while Abcondis sought to drive home the counter-attack against the *Exsanguinator*, but the moment of hope had gone. Now evenly matched and dragged into messy, desperate engagements, both fleets filled the void with fire, blood and torn metal as they wrestled for supremacy. Through the carnage flew Angron, barely aware of the titanic battle around him. He plummeted into Malakbael's atmosphere with a howl of white-hot bloodlust, making for the source of the psychic beacon.

MARTYRS ALL

Having received Admiral Pell's warning, Canoness Kade commanded her shipmasters to plot an intercept course for the *Clarion Dire* and its spearhead. She vowed she would not permit the heretic host to reach Malakbael, no matter the cost. Flogging their labour gangs and pushing their enginariums to the limits, three entire task forces raced to match the traitors' speed and attack vector. Rather than hit the enemy head-on, Kade's ships swung in alongside the heretic spearhead almost as though they intended to join the formation. What followed was a running battle that saw wreck after blazing wreck shed in its wake as engines were crippled and hulls ruptured. Seeing that the *Clarion Dire* and its largest escort vessels could not be stopped by this method, and with her own forces dwindling, Kade led a last-ditch boarding assault onto the Ark of Omen, at the head of every Battle Sister and Space Marine under her command. As the last loyalist trooper vanished into the depths, all contact was lost. What transpired aboard that cursed hulk, none may ever know, but with just minutes until it reached Malakbael the *Clarion Dire* plunged suddenly into the warp. The shock wave of its crash translation tore the heart from what remained of its spearhead, scattering their formation long enough for Admiral Pell to catch up and exact vengeance. Of Verity Kade and her companions, nothing has been heard since...

Angron plunged through Malakbael's upper atmosphere, flames billowing around him as a dark contrail of smoke stained the sky in his wake. He knew precisely where he was going. This close, the Choral Engine had resolved into a miniature constellation of interlocking empyric energy streams and blazing soul-stars that burned into his warpsight like the after-image of an explosion.

Angron cared nothing for the rest of Malakbael. He had no interest in whatever gewgaw Abaddon sought here, where it might reside or whether the Despoiler would ever get his talons upon it. He desired only to extinguish the beacon and to slay every filthy sorcerer and mewling loyalist who had any part in its conjuration. And if its scouring fires should prove too much even for the Red Angel? Then some small part of Angron hoped that at long last, the psychic onslaught already peeling strips from his metaphysical being might finally prove enough to destroy him for good.

As the flames of Angron's atmospheric re-entry burned away, cloud banks like floating mountains were revealed below him. Lightning flickered in their depths. Angron drew his wings in tight, gave vent to a mighty roar, and plunged headlong into them. A thunderclap rolled out as he hit the clouds and they burst apart, hurled away from him as though an atomic warhead had detonated in their midst.

As the clouds peeled back, so the Imperial citadel was revealed below him. Angron saw a vast central dome, sheathed in layers of armour and void shields, bristling with towers and gun emplacements. Radiating out from that dome were miles upon miles of fortifications, anti-orbital weapons batteries, armoured hangars and interlocking trench networks excavated right through the bulldozed rubble of what had once been shrine buildings and prayer-gardens. Angron supposed the citadel's architects thought it formidable. He felt nothing but contempt as he looked upon it. This, he thought, was hardly the Emperor's palace.

Dozens of Icarus installations atop roofs and spires swivelled to track Angron. A hail of fire converged upon him. His fury swelled to new heights of apoplexy as the Butcher's Nails pounded, pounded, pounded in his mind and laser blasts scorched his flesh. Bellowing, he spiralled down through interlacing webs of flak fire, swatting missiles aside with his blades, buffeted by detonations. Angron sensed the air ionising around him. Energy crackled over his armour, and the next instant he was caught in the full blast of an anti-orbital laser cannon. Pain devoured every iota of Angron's being as his corporeal form burned to ash. For a fleeting moment he felt the temptation to allow it, to tumble back into the empyrean only to be spat out somewhere new where the slaughter would begin again.

As they had repeatedly this day already, Angron's fury and hatred thrust the impulse aside. Unquenchable killing rage drew his corporeal vessel back together and he swept onward, too furious by far to die.

As he bore down upon the loyalist citadel, Angron saw small figures dashing along fire steps and taking position on battlements. They raised their guns in his direction. They shouted orders and prayers. He saw Space Marines amongst them and skinned his lips back from his fangs in a sneer. Angron dropped through the citadel's void shields with a crack of overpressure, then spread his wings with a boom and wheeled hard, loyalist fire chasing him through the sky. He swung the axe Spinegrinder into the flank of an armoured tower with meteoric force. Cracks exploded across the reinforced ferrocrete and the upper stories teetered then fell in an avalanche of rubble and bodies.

Angron swooped onward as the Butcher's Nails pounded, pounded, pounded in his mind. He swept down upon a battlemented rooftop packed with soldiers, landing without slowing and hitting them at a run. He scythed screaming warriors from his path with reaping blows before hurling himself from the rooftop and taking to the wing again. Angron plunged between more armoured towers, lashing out and sending Icarus emplacements and fighting platforms tumbling amidst blossoming explosions.

As he dove into a man-made canyon between high fortress walls, screaming engines and a swarm of missiles announced a flight of Valkyrie gunships rising to meet him. Angron shrugged off their fire and ploughed in amongst them with a roar. He smashed the aircraft from the skies one after another. The last he impaled with the blade Samni'arius, beating his wings and rising high before casting the aircraft down like a meteor. It smashed through the roof of an orbital defence silo. Moments later, apocalyptic explosions annihilated the installation from within.

All the while Angron felt the pummelling of the psychic beacon, but resisted the temptation to dive straight for it. He didn't want to simply win here. He would utterly humble those who had angered the Blood God, and show their fortress for the laughable hovel it truly was.

As this thought pierced the red haze in his mind, Angron beat his wings and climbed high before streaking down to land outside the earthworks before the citadel's colossal main gates. He endured

a moment of near transcendental agony as the pounding of the Nails and the screaming of the Choral Engine melded in his skull. In that instant Angron perceived not the citadel before him, but the walls of the Emperor's palace where once he had stood and dared the fury of the gunners upon the walls. Amidst the blazing psychic radiance he thought he saw a gleaming golden figure staring dispassionately down, dissecting him with its gaze.

'I will not be denied,' spat Angron, and as Malakbael swam back into focus he saw hundreds of soldiers in the trenches before him, running, pointing, yelling. Tanks snorted smoke from their exhausts as they raced towards him, turret guns swivelling in his direction. Huge gun emplacements on the walls swung to face him.

'Let the pain come! Let the blood flow for the Lord of Skulls! Flee or stand, I will make offerings of you all!'

Angron strode towards the gates. Each cloven footfall sent cracks racing through the ground, infernal light and sulphurous fumes rising from them. The loyalist guns spoke, and again Angron found himself at the heart of a firestorm. Bolts and las-blasts splashed from his armour. Explosions wreathed him in flame and left spatters of blood-ichor sizzling in his wake. Driven on by ferocity and hate, Angron accelerated into a lope, then a run, leaning head-on into the storm of ordnance. As he charged, so he loosed a bellow of such supernatural rage that it cracked armaglass, burst hearts and sent entire platoons of soldiers fleeing in mindless terror.

'BLOOD FOR THE BLOOD GOD!'

Angron reached the trench lines running full tilt, barging through them with his blades whirling. Loyalists came apart in showers of gore as though they had been cast into some vast industrial thresher. Heads by the dozen tumbled into the blood-soaked mud. A swing of Spinegrinder sent a Leman Russ battle tank tumbling end over end, crushing everything in its path before it detonated in a cascading fireball. Shells rained around Angron, hurling up fountains of mud, blood and torn flesh, but they stood no chance of slowing him now. The Nails pounded, pounded, pounded in his mind. His will was an endless howl of hate and fury that could not be denied. Even the battering psychic waves of the beacon could not stay his wrath.

The butchery became a blur as Angron beat his wings to speed his charge and pounded towards the gates. Screams and desperate prayer washed over him amidst a tide of blood. His every blade-swing ended dozens of lives. He swatted armoured vehicles aside as though they weighed nothing, their hulls caved in, their ammunition detonating to shower the loyalists with hot shrapnel. Nothing could stop him. Nothing even came close.

Angron was suddenly disgusted at these pitiful impediments the Imperium called soldiers. They were unworthy. He gave a bellow of rage and launched himself high, swinging axe and blade down to connect with the citadel gates. The towering armoured doors were smashed inward, as much by the force of Angron's furious will as by the physical power of his blows.

Vast hinges sheared and chains snapped as they were subjected to violence far beyond their tolerances. Angron had a brief glimpse of ranks of soldiers and tanks packing the marshalling yard beyond, before the sundered metal mass of the doors crashed down amidst them and hurled them into bloody disarray.

Angron threw back his head, spread his wings with a hollow thunderclap, and gave voice to a wordless roar of challenge. As he did so, he saw that the tattered clouds were racing red and black across a blood-stained sky. He felt the winds of the warp rising, pressing back against the becalming aura of the Choral Engine. Trails of fire rent the heavens and Angron realised his warriors in orbit must be hurling drop craft and ordnance planetwards in an effort to support his attack. He caught the brazen moan of warp horns upon the wind and knew that beyond the veil of reality, the daemons of Khorne also raced to join the slaughter. Such had been the tithe of blood and skulls from this colossal battle, Angron was hardly surprised.

'But they are not yours to claim,' he snarled, even as his enemies in the marshalling yard recovered their wits and opened fire upon him. With a ground-shaking rumble, a super-heavy tank surged from an Aquila-shaped arch leading deeper into the fortress, and fired a huge shell at him. Angron swatted the projectile aside quicker than thought. The explosion brought a swathe of the gatehouse crashing down and Angron lunged from its path, into the front ranks of those who opposed him.

The Butcher's Nails were pounding, pounding, pounding in his mind. The fortress lay like an open wound before him, his to reach into and rip out its still-beating heart. Mortal foes flooded from every doorway and hatch, frightened-looking officers screaming at them to fire everything they had. Beyond them, the Choral Engine blazed like a screaming supernova and beat at him with its hateful heat. Angron welcomed the pain into himself as he killed, and killed, and killed.

++ HATE IS HONEST. HATE IS JUST. HATE IS HOLY. ++

THE BLOOD STORM BREAKS

As Angron tore his way deeper into the Fortress of Light and the savage deadlock raged on in the void, so the battle for Malakbael degenerated ever further into anarchy. Billions had died in a matter of hours. Even the influence of the Choral Engine could not wholly negate the power of such a colossal offering to Khorne, and so the Blood God's supernatural influence waxed strong.

Fleetmaster Abcondis stood firm, lashed to his command lectern by magna-tethers as his battered flagship shook violently. He was the eye of a storm made up of officers and Tech-Priests, strategic reports, damage control warnings, rapidly relayed orders and bombastic prayer. Abcondis strove to keep a grip on the grand strategic picture, entrusting the running of the *Honour of Terra* to his subordinates.

Out in the deep void Admiral Pell was swiftly gaining the upper hand over what remained of the *Clarion Dire*'s former spearhead. Meanwhile, the battle over Malakbael had broken into three distinct engagements. The *Exsanguinator* still led a formidable traitor force high above the planet's north pole. So savage had that battle grown that – in void war terms – it had become a close-quarters knife fight. The Grey Knights' strike cruiser led the loyalist forces in that battle. According to incoming reports, it was locked in a deadly dance of manoeuvre and broadside with the *Exsanguinator* as each vessel tore chunks from the other.

The second conflict raged near the planet's equator, above clouds that had adopted a disturbingly crimson hue and begun to swirl like flowing blood. The *Conqueror* and several heretic grand cruisers had reached Malakbael's upper atmosphere and begun vomiting drop craft and ordnance down upon the Fortress of Light. Chapter Master DuGal was leading his Void Talons Space Marines, along with the Imperial Fists and Howling Griffons who had survived Groupmaster Xeng's ill-fated retreat, in an attempt to stop them. Many of the Space Marine forces had committed to boarding assaults, daring the psychotic fury of the World Eaters in their determination to stem the flow of traitor forces to the surface. Yet Fleetmaster Abcondis had his doubts. Strategic data spoke of an unstoppable monster raging through the Fortress of Light, and of an increasing heretic presence pressing in through the gap torn by the creature. Most bizarre of all, pict-capture had reached him of a host of World Eaters tanks and Daemon Engines storming down through the skies at impossible speeds, not in drop craft, but borne upon a supernatural bridge of flame.

Believing that this planetstrike presented a greater threat than the continued survival of the *Exsanguinator*, Fleetmaster Abcondis had created the third engagement zone himself. He had ordered the *Honour of Terra* to come about, had rallied the largest attack ships he could to his side, and was even now forging a path towards the *Conqueror* and its invasion flotilla. The manoeuvre had drawn the attention of dozens of smaller heretic vessels, which hurled themselves at Abcondis' formation in waves. Some sought to defend a secondary drop zone, where traitor Titan-landers delivered god-machines to prey upon Malakbael's coastal shrines. The rest seemed intent only on reaching and boarding the loyalist flagship itself.

It was one amongst this latter group that dove through the interlocking defensive fire of Abcondis' formation and survived long enough to hurl a swarm of Dreadclaw drop pods at the *Honour of Terra*. The fleetmaster was all too aware of the horrific capacity for slaughter possessed by the World Eaters boarding troops, but his own vessel was not without its defences. Not only did it boast a massive garrison of Naval armsmen, but there were also several maniples of Kastelan Robots gifted by a high-placed Martian magus, as well as an honour guard of Ultramarines led by a hard-eyed killer named Lieutenant Scipion.

The fleetmaster sent urgent requests for a tactical update, and received his answer in the form of a direct vox-link from Scipion himself. Expecting to hear of a bloody but ultimately one-sided fight to exterminate what could not be more than two- or three-score World Eaters, Abcondis was shocked at the Lieutenant's grim report. The boarders were led by a monster, a figure of dark myth Scipion named as Khârn the Betrayer. The dread in Scipion's voice told Abcondis all he needed to know about this new threat. Apparently Khârn had already torn through the upper aft gun decks, he and

'Here is a foe that must be more than simply fought. To slay such twisted heretics is not enough. To win victory is not enough. To drive them from this system with their tails between their legs is not enough! These disgusting animals must be exterminated without mercy and every trace of them blasted and burned away until it is as though they never were. Only then can we consider our duty to the Emperor done in this benighted place.'

– Chapter Master Yoshiro DuGal of the Void Talons, rallying vox address during the Battle of Malak

his followers slaughtering many times their number of Imperial defenders while shrugging off fire that should have seen them slain ten times over. Scipion reported that Khârn's battle-madness was such that he had even cut down several of his own warriors, but that this had not prevented him from storming one of the aft turbolift shrines and pressing up towards the command bridge. Scipion and his battle-brothers were even now hastening to intercept the heretic attackers. Yet his message to Abcondis was stark: if the fleetmaster wished to live, he should abandon ship at once.

THE WOUNDED ARK

As the battle raged, the *Stygian Heart* had limped away trailing flames and wreckage. Faith shaken, Balefleet destroyed, Apophari Quen and his fellow magisters had attempted to divine their best course of action. Quen himself remained convinced that Tzeentch had sent them to Malakbael to seize its sorcerous prize. He argued that the Tomeweavers should lurk in wait until the battle was done and both sides suitably weakened by their furious fighting. This, surely, was the most pleasingly cunning plan. Krade was adamant that instead they should flee. Such was the wise course, he argued, and they still had an Ark of Omen with which to work Tzeentch's will. Lakshet-Who-Hears had meanwhile been quiet and furtive, but at last he spoke. A foul voice whispered through the ducts and corridors of the Ark, he claimed; a thing of hissing static and whirring cogs. Quen, hopeful still, asked if it could be the voice of Tzeentch.

It was then that the three Scourged felt the Ark shudder and heard the pulse and rumble of distant engines change its pitch. Bewildered, they detected glints of copper and silver flowing through the walls, the ceiling, even the deck beneath their feet. Krade reached down in silence and plucked a delicate clockwork bloom from the ground. He stared at it in confusion.

All through the *Stygian Heart*, damaged plating and wires reknitted like living flesh. Weapons systems and shielding devices that had been ancient before the Human race took their first steps hummed into life. Strange will-o'-the-wisps of crackling lightning raced along corridors and slid between static-laced monitors. Within its cavernous ritual chamber, the Ark's warp portal whirled into life, empyric energies swirling like a captive storm in response to the arrival of a being of timeless and unstoppable evil. That entity now stood atop the crooked spine of the *Stygian Heart*, muttering in disgust at the condition of the vast vessel. Vashtorr the Arkifane raised his huge brass hammer and smote the hull, just once. In response, the leviathan hulk swung ponderously about and swept back towards the battle.

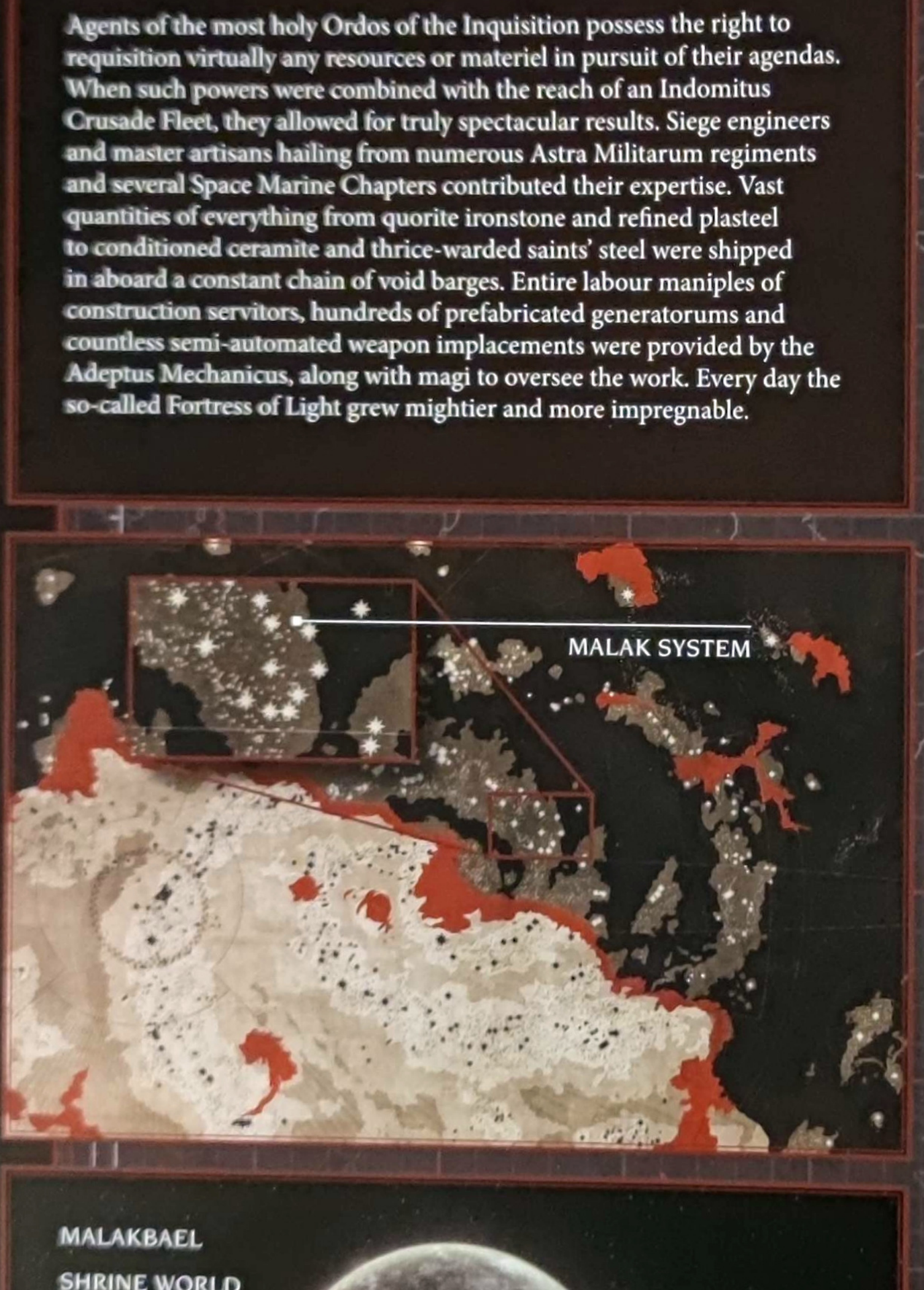
INFERNAL ONSLAUGHT

The flames of war spread across Malakbael's surface even as they raged ever higher in the void above. Traitor god-machines of the Legio Carnivorum and the Legio Scarifactor stalked through the coastal shrine-cities ranged along the fringes of Saint Gedawel's Sea. Fleet Quartus

THE FORTRESS OF LIGHT

When Glori Emagna discovered the Choral Engine of Malakbael, it was already protected by ancient fortifications that her conjectohistoritors speculated might date all the way back to the Dark Age of Technology. Once she had confirmed the true value of the beacon, the Inquisitor determined that these defences would have to be reinforced considerably.

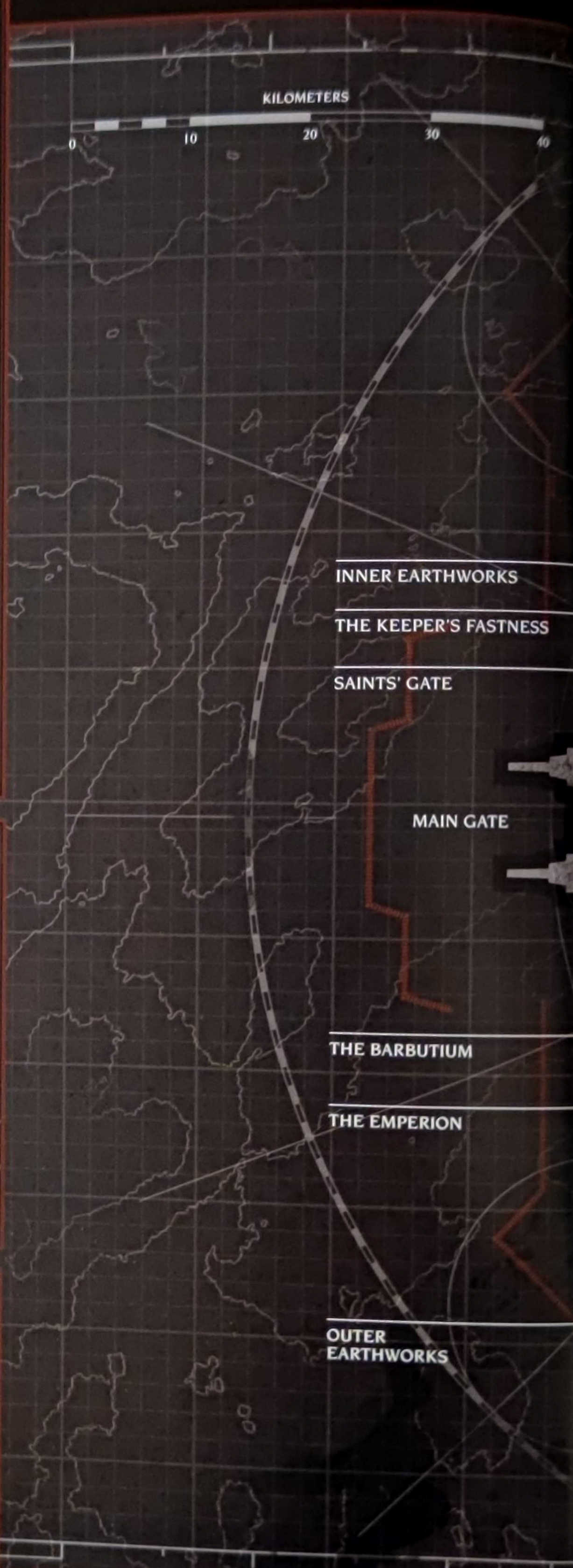
Agents of the most holy Ordos of the Inquisition possess the right to requisition virtually any resources or materiel in pursuit of their agendas. When such powers were combined with the reach of an Indomitus Crusade Fleet, they allowed for truly spectacular results. Siege engineers and master artisans hailing from numerous Astra Militarum regiments and several Space Marine Chapters contributed their expertise. Vast quantities of everything from quorite ironstone and refined plasteel to conditioned ceramite and thrice-warded saints' steel were shipped in aboard a constant chain of void barges. Entire labour maniples of construction servitors, hundreds of prefabricated generatorums and countless semi-automated weapon implacements were provided by the Adeptus Mechanicus, along with magi to oversee the work. Every day the so-called Fortress of Light grew mightier and more impregnable.



MALAKBAEL

SHRINE WORLD
ORB. DIST. 3.7AU
Z/V-U TEMP. 19°C
TITHE GRADE:
PERMISSUS
SACROSANCTUS
EXACTUS INQUIS
ULTIMA

LOCATION
COORDINATES:
77°45'8"N,
03°66'11.1"W



EAST GATE
THE OVERLOOK
HAWK BASTION
FORTIFAX GIGANTUM
THE CHORAL ENGINE
SOUTH GATE
THE CRIMSON BASTION
HAWK'S ROOST AIRFIELD
BEATUM PORTALIS
ALPHAE PORTALIS
WEST GATE

ground forces fought back as best they could. Knights of House Terryn performed gallant flanking runs, attempting to strike at the Titans from the rear while Sisters of the Order of Our Martyred Lady and regiments of Krieg and Ulathu artillery sought to hold the Titans' attention to the fore. These tactics were hideously costly, the god-engines massacring thousands of loyalists for each of their number that fell, but they did slow the heretic advance. About the god-machines' feet, twisted warriors and servitors of the Dark Mechanicum pillaged loyalist technologies and snatched up soldiers and pilgrims alike to experiment upon. Outnumbered Krieg platoons did all they could to drive the tech-heretics back, often dying to the last man and woman in the process.

In Malakbael's southern hemisphere, the great spaceport city of Hallowed Helm burned. Here, elements of the Sons of Medusa and Imperial Fists had reinforced the Astra Militarum regiments stationed to protect the spaceport. They faced the hordes of Lord Invocatus, who swept down from bloody skies upon a tide of supernatural flame. As orbital bombardments indiscriminately hammered the city, Invocatus' swift spearheads of tanks and Daemon Engines crashed through the loyalist lines again and again. Where the Sons of Medusa attempted to draw them into armour battles, the World Eaters ploughed through their formations, leaving trails of destruction but refusing to be bogged down. Where the Imperial Fists dug into fortified positions, Invocatus' hosts outflanked them or plunged down from on high to wreak bloody havoc. Blood ran in rivers down sanctified colonnades. Severed heads were scattered over the ground in ghastly profusion. As the fighting escalated, waves of heretic drop craft streaked down to exploit the growing beachhead.

The Sanctum of the God-Emperor Resplendent; the temples of Mount Ephnari; the Library of the Star Pilgrims – each venerable and sacred site became a gore-spattered killing ground as loyalist troops fought to hold back the frenzied onslaught of millions of Khorne-worshipping fanatics. Blood pooled into lakes in blast craters and submerged the bodies of the dead. Mounds of decapitated heads rose higher and higher amidst blazing shrines until they towered above the buildings. Countless voices were raised in battle-prayer to the Lord of Blood. In answer, the red and black clouds raced faster across the skies while the ground rumbled and cracked. Even the blazing light of the Choral Engine could not burn away the carmine mists that gathered across each battlefield, nor the crimson-skinned daemonic entities that charged from within them, stoked to a frenzy by the ensuing slaughter.

The daemons of Khorne flickered like candle-flames. Their war cries and horns echoed as though from a great distance. None of this made them any less terrifying to the loyalist soldiery faced with abominations from scripture, beneath whose hooves the landscape twisted into molten brass and heaving masses of skulls. One hard-pressed Astra Militarum regiment after another collapsed into rout at the savage onslaught of the daemons. It did not matter that the entities burned with supernatural flame and were consumed one after another, sent screaming back into the warp by the Choral Engine's light. By the time this happened, the daemons had carved deep wounds in wavering Imperial battle lines and driven countless loyalist soldiers into a state of maddened terror. Amidst such anarchy, the butchers of the World Eaters and their allies ran amok.

Nowhere was the bloodshed more horrific than within the Fortress of Light. Angron's supernatural fury swelled to new and monstrous levels as he cut his way through wave upon wave of frantic defenders. As his rage grew, so its dark spiritual mass billowed larger in the warp to cast a pall over the light of the Choral Engine. Amidst the supernatural eclipse of Angron's wrath, the daemons of Khorne were able to manifest in terrible strength. No less than eight Bloodthirsters tore their way through the veil to fight at Angron's side. Batteries of Skull Cannons hammered the fortress' inner bastions with volleys of explosive skulls, collapsing battlements and blasting armoured gateways. Thousands of Bloodletters and stampeding Bloodcrushers swept through the breaches, clashing with Ogryns thrown hastily forward with huge slabshields to plug the gaps.

The World Eaters and their mortal allies poured through the citadel's collapsed main gatehouse bellowing war cries. Rumbling forward amidst the chanting hordes and their ragged crimson banners came Lords of Skulls that crashed into the fortress walls and tore further breaches. Brazen war horns echoed like thunder between the shuddering towers of the Fortress of Light as loyalist gunners poured deluges of fire down upon the invaders from every angle. The carnage intensified to apocalyptic proportions.

IN HIS NAME

The loyalists were not blind to the rapidly deteriorating situation around the Choral Engine. Refusing flat out to abandon his flagship, Fleetmaster Abcondis issued orders to all available drop-capable loyalists to abandon the fight in orbit and deploy to reinforce the beacon's defenders. He could see from strategic reports that Admiral Aquilant Pell would soon arrive over Malakbael with naval reinforcements. Abcondis was gambling that

EXSANGUINATED

Even as Angron was carving a path through the Fortress of Light, so Brother-Captain Cromm and his Grey Knights had fought their way to the bridge of the *Exsanguinator*. The battle there against the Daemon Prince Dreagh'or was a savage one and cost Cromm more brothers than he could truly afford. Yet through firepower and banishment rituals, the Grey Knights drove the daemon howling and cursing back into the warp. Robbed of its link to its unholy master, so the warp-twisted *Exsanguinator* too began to die, its fire slackening and engines going dark. The battle barge's fall was a mighty blow against the heretic void forces, but Cromm cursed the time and lives it had cost, for the Grey Knights' truest test still lay ahead. Employing personal teleportation technologies, he and his warriors vanished from the dying Chaos warship, flashing down towards the Choral Engine and their confrontation with the prophesied foe they had come here to defeat.

this would allow him to stabilise the void war and drive off, if not slay, the *Conqueror*. The Navis Imperialis forces were badly battered but still numerous, with scattered units from the earlier engagements rushing in from across the system to add to their number. If they could wrestle order from the madness, Abcondis was certain they could still defeat their enemies. His muster represented a vast portion of Fleet Quartus – it was simply unthinkable to him that they might be defeated, no matter how colossal the heretics' strength.

So it was that a fresh rain of dropships streaked the skies above the Fortress of Light. They screamed out loyalist identifier hymnals and came flanked by wing upon wing of Navis Imperialis attack craft. Lightning and Thunderbolt fighters dove through the racing crimson clouds and engaged wheeling flocks of Heldrakes and bat-winged Khornate daemons blighting the skies over the citadel. Space Marine gunships and wings of interceptors wove between the blazing towers to deliver Adeptus Astartes strike forces into battle, before providing them with potent air cover. Meanwhile, hard-eyed naval officers in low orbit obeyed their orders and unleashed barrage bombs and lance blasts directly into the citadel's outer precincts. Some offered up prayers for the souls of the loyalists caught in the blasts as their targeting cogitators reported widespread and catastrophic damage.

None of it was enough to slow Angron. The Daemon Primarch of the World Eaters hacked, trampled and bludgeoned a red path of ruin through one defence line after another. The Saints' Gate, designed to withstand super-heavy siege weaponry and sustained melta-fire, fell to a single blow from Spinegrinder. The labyrinthine barricade-sprawls, fire corridors and killing grounds of the so-called Keeper's Fastness did not daunt Angron and his Bloodthirster honour guard; those loyalists who managed to stand their ground and fire upon so mortally terrifying an assemblage of daemon lords could only cry out in dismay as the invaders tore a headlong path through miles of reinforced ferrocrete and adamantine. Angron led a tide of daemons and heretics up the Gallant Stair and, after a ferocious battle, overran the valiant Imperial Fists who stood in his path. The final approach to the Choral Engine lay open, over the bridges spanning the Resonatum. The armoured dome of the Sanctum loomed huge just ahead of Angron's horde.

Then came the booming voice of Inquisitor Glori Emagna, ringing out through every laud hailer and voxponder in the citadel. She poured scorn upon the invading hosts, urging them to make what foul obeisance they could to their unclean deities, for the God-Emperor's judgement was upon them. Even as she delivered her speech from a vox-shrine beneath the Engine's Focusing Vane, Emagna's most loyal adepts were hastening from one fail-safe console to the next and doing all they could to disable the dimly understood limiter protocols moderating the power output of the Choral Engine. The rest of Emagna's small private army held at gunpoint the horrified tech-magi, dissuading them from interfering with this reckless act of tech-heresy. The Martian priests cried out to the Inquisitor to stop, but their pleas fell on deaf ears. Emagna was convinced that the light of the God-Emperor was the last, best weapon in her arsenal. She had decreed that it would shine out as brightly as it could.

As the last limiter cut out, the wailing of the implanted psykers rose to a new and desperate pitch. Psychic corposant crackled over every surface in the Sanctum as the energy waves rolling around and around the Resonatum accelerated to fever pitch. Angron, who had taken to the air to soar above the vast toroid tunnel, howled in redoubled agony as a colossal shock wave of psychic energy hit him. Flesh smouldering, he fell from the air to slam down on an arched bridge. All around him, daemons of Khorne were scoured from existence by the tsunami of invisible radiance.

Another shock wave followed the first, then another. Each banished more of Khorne's daemons back to the warp. At the same time, the power of the Choral Engine swelled until loyalist and heretic alike could hear the screaming of the psykers in their minds. Throughout the Malak System, and even along astropathic conduits to every system and sub-sector where loyalist forces made use of the Choral Engine's powers, the raw psychic brilliance triggered headaches, visions, strange voices and bizarre manifest phenomena. Yet for all its unintended side effects, Lady Emagna's zealous plan appeared to be working.

ANGRON UNBOWED

Suddenly robbed of their daemonic allies, the World Eaters' onslaught bled momentum. The Heretic Astartes continued to hurl themselves forward with undimmed ferocity, but their cult

followers and Militarum Traitoris allies were badly shaken by the banishment of beings they saw as the holy embodiments of Khorne's might. Loyalist fire continued to rain down upon them from all sides. Space Marine forces, swift to capitalise on this sudden shift in the strategic situation, drove punishing counter-attacks into the heretic ranks. Artillerymen and warriors who, moments before, had been trying to stave off the attack of infernal entities, were suddenly freed to vent their horror and wrath upon those that had fought in league with the daemons. Hymns to the God-Emperor rang out as the beleaguered defenders rallied and pushed back.

Of the daemonic hordes that led the Khornate charge, now only Angron and the eight Bloodthirsters remained. Even they were wracked with agony, advancing towards the Choral Engine as though leaning into a ferocious psychic headwind. As volleys of Imperial fire landed amongst them, first one then another of the Bloodthirsters tumbled back into the warp with howls of cheated fury.

Angron's rage knew no bounds. To be so bombarded by the raw energies of hostile sorcery drove him to extremes of apoplexy and agony that even he had never experienced. Not in all Angron's long and hazy millennia of butchery, hatred and pain had he ever known a sensation like it. The Bloodthirsters around him stomped forward roaring, or beat their wings ferociously in their attempts to make headway. They struggled and suffered. Yet Angron's bestial features twisted into a monstrous approximation of a smile. It was an expression not of happiness but instead of raw, bloody-minded exhilaration. To know such a challenge, to hurl every iota of his rage against this avalanche of witchcraft, verged upon catharsis and fired Angron to fight harder and harder.

He swung Spinegrinder in an arc and buried its teeth in the bridge on which he stood, using the weapon's haft to drag himself forward into the psychic gale. He stabbed the ground with Samni'arius, and again heaved himself towards the Choral Engine with a roar. Again he slammed his weapons into the bridge, and again, and again, each time building momentum, accelerating into a lurching charge. Angron's flowing mane was aflame, his wings tattered and smouldering like burned parchment, but he did not slow. Drawing the remaining Bloodthirsters along in his wrathful wake, Angron powered forward into the beacon's radiance with psychotic, single-minded determination. He charged through a high arch and into the Sanctum of the Choral Engine.

Emerging high up near the dome's ceiling, Angron took several loping strides out along the ironbound gantry leading to the Focusing Vane, before blessed explosives planted by Lady Emagna's followers detonated beneath his hooves. Caught by surprise, Angron fell amidst blazing wreckage, trailing a billowing halo

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To banish a daemonic entity requires that being's true name, recited repeatedly and with precise intonation as part of an intricate ritual litany of abjuration. The more powerful the daemon, the mightier the ritual and practitioners required.

ABCONDIS' BANE

As blood ran in rivers on the planet below, Fleetmaster Abcondis' *Honour of Terra* led a spearhead of Imperial warships in a desperate low-orbit attack run against the *Conqueror* and its companion ships. First one then another heretic vessel broke apart under the Imperial guns, their wreckage tumbling away into Malakbael's atmosphere amidst coronae of flame. Wounded all along its starboard flank, with explosive decompression venting twisted crew into the void and firestorms scouring its gun decks, the feral spirit of the *Conqueror* rebelled. Unwilling to be slain, the ship's haunted machine spirit triggered its warp engines and crash-translated into the empyrean. Yet remaining to do his duty cost Abcondis dear. As Lieutenant Scipion had predicted, nothing could halt Khârn the Betrayer. The fleetmaster's last transmission was a hurried string of orders against a backdrop of screams, gunfire and the revving of chainteeth through bone. It ended with three words roared by a monstrous voice, caught by Abcondis' vox-relay and broadcast to his horrified shipmasters.

'KILL! MAIM! BURN!'

of flame. He struck the floor of the Sanctum hard enough to smash a crater into it, and was immediately engulfed in firepower from every side. Emerging from doorways and thumping up the steps from the catacombs below came the surviving Grey Knights of Brother-Captain Cromm's strike force. Supported by the Tempestus Scions of Lady Emagna's private army, they poured volley after volley of blessed ammunition into the Daemon Primarch. Meanwhile, from her position in the vox-shrine near the Focusing Vane, Emagna added her amplified voice to the rites of banishment even now being chanted by the Grey Knights.

Angron rose from the crater with a howl of fury so loud that many of the Tempestus Scions staggered and collapsed, hands pressed to helms within which eardrums and eyeballs had ruptured. In response, Cromm increased the vox-amplification of his gorget, and his brothers followed suit. More than three-score Grey Knights closed in on Angron, some clad in Terminator armour, several piloting towering Dreadknights, and all of them hammering the World Eaters Primarch with gunfire and focused psychic energies. Angron bellowed in rage but dropped to one knee as he was battered by wave after wave of psychic fury both from the Choral Engine and the massed Grey Knights. He began to flicker, his flesh blackening and cracking, clouds of cinders bursting from within his ravaged form. Rarely had any single warp entity been subjected to so colossal and focused a supernatural assault. Even Angron's unquenchable rage wasn't enough to stave it off.

The first Bloodthirster to erupt into the Sanctum spread its wings and dove straight down towards the Grey Knights. Two Dreadknight pilots saw the daemon coming and turned their guns upon it. Their psycannon fire ripped into the Bloodthirster, but even as it plunged from on high in its death dive it slammed into one of the Dreadknights with the force of a crashing fighter craft. Two more Bloodthirsters burst through the Sanctum's high arches, then another two. One sent its blazing whip coiling out in an impossibly long line of fire that stove in the door to the vox-shrine and wrapped around Lady Emagna. The Inquisitor's amplified prayers were cut off as she was wrenched, burning, from her sanctum. Still yelling rites of abjuration and firing her bolt pistol into the Bloodthirster's face, the Inquisitor was borne through the air to meet the swing of the daemon's axe. Her head tumbled hundreds of feet to the ground below, its expression still one of zealous wrath even in death.

The Bloodthirsters swooped down upon the Grey Knights. Even weakened by the pummelling of the Choral Engine, each was still a terrifying warlord of Khorne's daemon legions, a threat the Grey Knights dared not ignore. Commanding his brothers to drive back the Bloodthirsters, Brother-Captain Cromm advanced with his Paladins to complete the banishment of Angron. The other Grey Knights turned their guns skyward and hefted their crackling blades as the Bloodthirsters fell upon them and battle was joined in earnest.

Now spared the full fury of the Grey Knights, Angron rose again to his full height. His supernatural form cracked and hissed as welling gore quenched the fires wreathing him and the wounds in his blackened hide sealed shut. He revved Spinegrinder in a spray of blood and meat, then launched himself at Cromm and his Paladins. A volley of blessed bolt shells blew gobbets of flesh from Angron's body but could not stop him swinging his axe in a thunderous arc that tore a Paladin's head and shoulders from his body. Angron took a force spear through the chest, responding by driving Samni'arius through the wielder's helm.

Still chanting rites of banishment, Cromm himself stepped in and swung his Nemesis daemon hammer. His first blow caught Angron under the jaw and rocked the monstrous Primarch back. His reverse swing slammed into Angron's temple, snapping his head sideways and spraying boiling ichor. Sensing victory, Cromm swung the weapon a third time. Fast as lightning, Angron let Samni'arius fall upon its chain-shackle and caught the haft of Cromm's hammer. He brought Spinegrinder down with meteoric force. The weapon hit the crest of Cromm's helm with a piercing whine of teeth chewing through metal, and carried on downward, living up to its name amidst a fountain of the Brother-Captain's blood.

Angron hurled aside Cromm's mangled carcass, then gave a cry of wrath and agony as the fiercest pulse yet erupted from the Choral Engine. That, he thought, was what he had come to destroy. The beacon's all-consuming glare was all he could see. Its fires engulfed him like a solar wind that abraded his very essence. Weakened, blasted and stabbed at from all sides, driven on by a rage so pure as to be transcendental, Angron beat his ragged wings and rose into the air. He swooped across the Sanctum as it resonated with unfettered psychic power, and smote the Choral Engine with axe and blade.

In that moment Angron's pure fury transformed him into a supernatural conduit, a split-second singularity connecting realspace and the warp. As he struck he channelled not only his own absolute rage, but that of the Blood God and all his faithful.

They Strike to Earn Glory

Atop a storm-lashed ziggurat rising from an alien jungle, an android overlord swings his glowing blade. Headless, his golden-armoured foe crashes bonelessly down the ziggurat steps. As he does, the overlord's followers drone their praise for this latest inevitable victory.

They Strike in Hope of Freedom

The overseer raises his lash again, but this time labour-serf 88-double 4 is ready. She catches the scrawny overseer's wrist with her off hand and drives her improvised shiv up under his jaw. So the uprising begins.

They Strike Out of Hatred

Three of the gang are dead. The Enforcer killed them with his shotgun, cold-blooded executions all. But the Enforcer didn't get Gorv, and now he's sprawled on his back in sump-filth beneath the runoff downpour and Gorv is straddling his chest. Through his shattered visor, the Enforcer locks eyes with Gorv, expression utterly unrepentant. With a howl of loss and pain, Gorv brings his hatchet down with both hands and buries it in the Enforcer's face.

They Strike as Murderers

In a shadowed back-alley of Sec Maegra, a cloaked figure hastens along, shoulders hunched against the distant sound of screams and gunfire. They do not see the addict who lurks in the doorway as they pass, but they do feel his blade as it tears across their throat. Then they feel his hands rifling their pockets. Then they feel nothing more.

They Strike Out of Duty

The Einhyr Hearthguard knows she must time her blow perfectly. The corrupted one comes not for her, but for the Grimnyr she protects, but he will not harm the Living Ancestor. The purr of her enemy's armour servos gives him away. He lunges suddenly from the shadows, crimson eye-lenses flaring, but she is ready. Her concussion gauntlet connects with his chestplate and pulverises ceramite, fused bone, and a pair of poisonous hearts.

They Strike in Anger

The brawl in the fighting pit has been long and bruising, but at last the challenger lies bloody and broken. Giving full vent to his fury at this upstart, the Ork hefts a boulder in both hands and brings it crashing down upon his enemy's skull.

They Strike for Vengeance

Shrugging off a barrage of dancing warpflame, a feral warrior raises his frost-hued axe and swings it into the neck of his mortal enemy. As the sorcerer's helmed head tumbles to the ground his killer howls with unrepentant joy. 'For Fenris!'

They Strike with Faith

Her fear cannot stay her wrath. Running amidst a press of loyal soldiers, she screams praise to the God-Emperor and fires her lasgun into the traitor ranks. Up a muddy embankment now, into the teeth of the foe, following old Josiah the regimental priest. A traitor aims his autogun at her but he is too late. 'For the Emperor!' she roars as she drives her bayonet into the heretic's chest.

Angron swung his axe and sword towards the machinery of the Choral Engine. The razor teeth of Spinegrinder screamed and spat gobbets of gore as they span. The infernal entity within the blade Samni'arius trembled with eagerness at this opportunity to glut itself on the soul energies of the beacon. Below Angron the surviving Bloodthirsters were howling and writhing as though caught in the grip of an ecstasy of apoplexy. The Grey Knights, too, staggered, many falling to their knees and clutching their helmed heads as the wards graven into their armour blazed with light.

All of it seemed to Angron to be happening in increasingly slow motion, and amidst a thickening crimson haze. As his weapons crawled towards the metal skin of the psychic engine, so Angron's warpsight was bombarded by rapid visions. They assailed him like the gunfire from the walls of the Fortress of Light. Volleys of quick-fire images came and went in milliseconds, yet his Primarch's mind absorbed all of them. Angron saw killers of every race and creed, countless warriors and murderers scattered across a galaxy at war. Each and every one was striking their killing blows in concert with his own.

Angron and his surroundings ground to a halt like the flesh-clogged teeth of a well-used chainaxe. Spinegrinder and Samni'arius were separated from the Choral Engine by a matter of molecules. The searing light of the beacon flooded through Angron's entire being, leaving no corner of his blackened soul in darkness. Yet the pain and anger within him had surpassed even a daemon's supernatural capacity for sensory experience. Angron knew a numb kind of silence and peace. The Butcher's Nails fell still in his mind, and the absence of their gory percussion was deafening.

Something moved in the stillness, something to fill even the Daemon Primarch of the World Eaters with dread. Angron could not turn his head to look. Instead he sensed something impossibly colossal stirring behind his back. The motion was gargantuan beyond even Angron's capacity to comprehend. It set the stuff of reality a-tremble with its motion, and whipped the warp into a frenzy. Hatred screamed around Angron like a gale. Anger swept over him like wind-lashed rain. Angron sensed rather than saw the entity raise a weapon whose blade was broader than the circumference of a world, and whose edge could split space and time asunder. He did not understand how he could know this, but in that moment of inescapable knowledge he did not care. Angron sensed the entity's wrath beating against him like a pyre of tortured stars, and knew awe.

He wished to turn and stand his ground, to confront the colossus at his back even if it were the most laughably futile gesture of defiance in the history of reality. It was not hatred or madness that urged him to do this, nor the Nails driving him on like a whipped hound. In this one instant Angron knew clarity, free from wrath or pain, and knew that he did not wish to die with his back turned to the onset of that star-slaying blade.

Yet Angron's desires appeared irrelevant. Even his indomitable will could not prevail against the force that seemed to pin all reality in place as if it were a defeated fighter with its neck bared. Angron sensed a god of battle draw back its blade. He heard it roar as it drove the weapon home, the sound so vast that it was a thing felt rather than heard. Angron's own roar of defiance melded with that of his god as he embraced his own absolute annihilation.

But the blade did not cleave a path through Angron and all around him. Rather, he felt the titanic rush of killing fire and blood-madness as the blow funnelled into and through his mortal vessel. Billions of sacrificial death-blows struck home as one, just as Angron plunged his own weapons deep into this beacon whose signal beamed out across the stars.

Reality catapulted back into motion. Violence exploded upon every side. Agony beyond endurance ripped through Angron's body as he felt himself rendered into the conduit for a flood-tide of blazing hatred that roared from him into the psychic engine.

The power channelled through Angron tore up through the mechanisms of the Choral Engine in a rippling string of crimson detonations crashing one upon another. The air was dragged from the Sanctum in a heartbeat. Supernatural ragefire flooded the structure.

Angron felt his physical form obliterated, and heard the distant howls of the Bloodthirsters as they were hurled back into the warp.

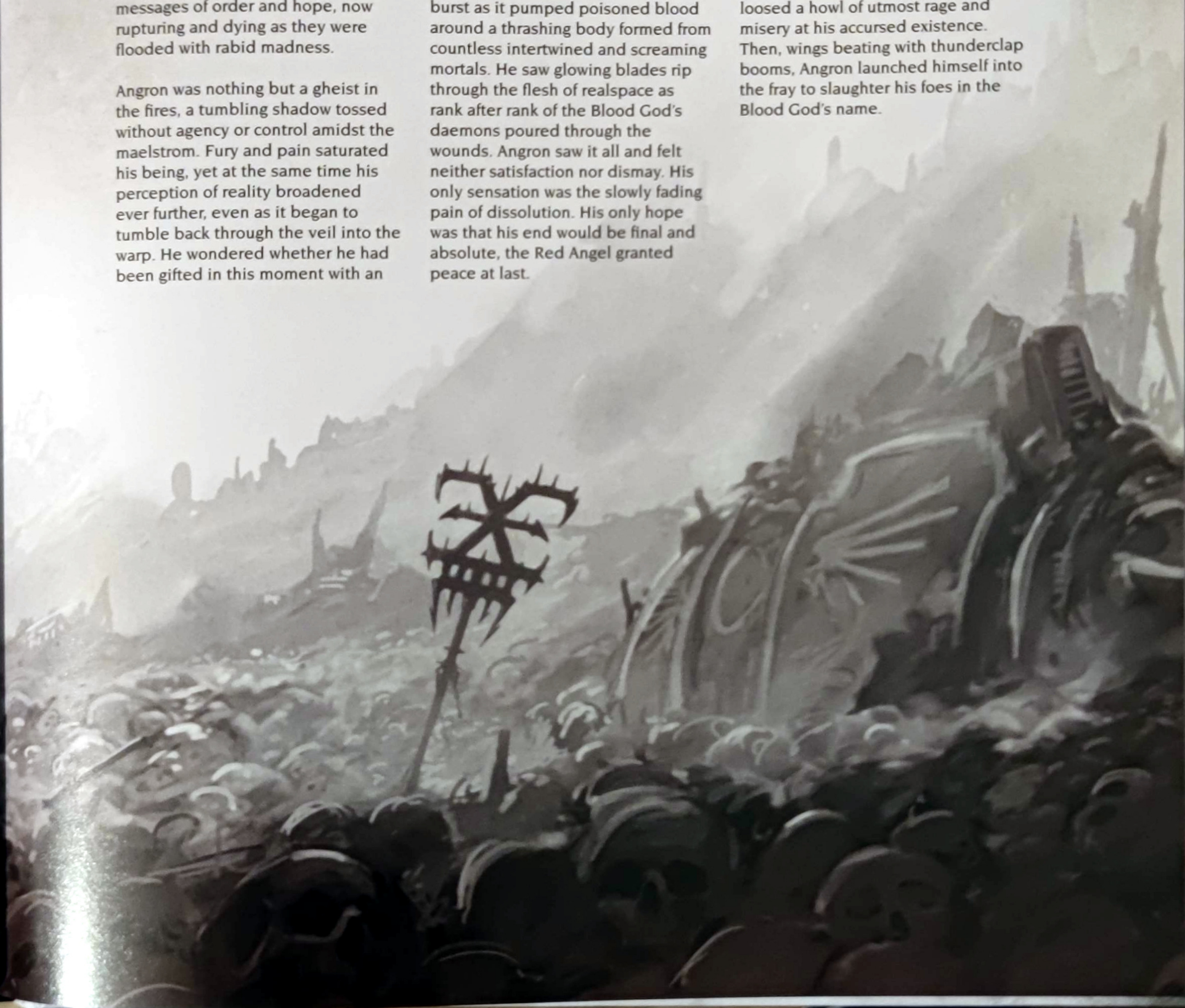
Every other being in the chamber was atomised instantaneously, yet Angron's incorporeal consciousness endured. He was borne upward amidst an expanding storm of fire. Somehow he saw the witches in their alcoves and the Astropaths in their chambers burst into flame and whip away in clouds of ash as impossible volumes rage flooded through them. He felt the Murder-curse of Khorne surge up through the rupturing dome, and up, and up, like a supernatural geyser of blood bursting through Malakbael's atmosphere. The energies radiated outward. They raced along glimmering psychic channels established to transmit messages of order and hope, now rupturing and dying as they were flooded with rabid madness.

Angron was nothing but a gheist in the fires, a tumbling shadow tossed without agency or control amidst the maelstrom. Fury and pain saturated his being, yet at the same time his perception of reality broadened ever further, even as it began to tumble back through the veil into the warp. He wondered whether he had been gifted in this moment with an iota of Khorne's own view of reality. Perhaps instead he was enduring a devastating final barrage of visions torn from the minds of dying souls before he was consigned to oblivion.

Whatever the case, Angron saw stars shudder and run like blood. He witnessed black bolts of lightning stabbing down into sundered cityscapes packed with howling murderers. Images flickered across his fading vision of Aquila banners stained with spreading red, their edges smouldering as the symbols on them writhed into leering skulls and brazen Khornate runes. He saw a colossal brass heart thundering fit to burst as it pumped poisoned blood around a thrashing body formed from countless intertwined and screaming mortals. He saw glowing blades rip through the flesh of realspace as rank after rank of the Blood God's daemons poured through the wounds. Angron saw it all and felt neither satisfaction nor dismay. His only sensation was the slowly fading pain of dissolution. His only hope was that his end would be final and absolute, the Red Angel granted peace at last.

The next thing he felt was the rush of empyric energies as his corporeal form knitted itself anew. He opened his eyes and saw an unfamiliar landscape of dome-habs, vox towers and battlemented walls lashed by steaming crimson rain. He felt Spinegrinder and Samni'arius in his grip. He saw screaming loyalist soldiers fleeing from his manifestation, and exultant traitor militiamen howling their praise at his coming.

Like knives driven into Angron's mind, the Nails commenced their pounding, pounding, pounding once again. He threw back his head and loosed a howl of utmost rage and misery at his accursed existence. Then, wings beating with thunderclap booms, Angron launched himself into the fray to slaughter his foes in the Blood God's name.



THE MURDER-CURSE

The destruction of the Choral Engine released an explosion so catastrophically powerful that it tore Malakbael itself in two. This physical detonation was echoed in the warp by an eruption of empyric energies that rapidly grew into a raging warp storm. Fragments of the planet as large as mountain ranges tumbled away into the void. Billions died in a matter of minutes.

With the death of the Choral Engine, the war on Malakbael came to a sudden, cataclysmic end. Those ground forces not killed in the initial explosion were trapped on a disintegrating world amidst eruptions of magma, shattering earthquakes and the violent collapse of Malakbael's atmosphere and magnetic field. A scant handful of evacuations were successful, mostly performed by Space Marine pilots braving the burning skies to snatch their comrades from the jaws of death. Countless more failed as drop craft were smashed from the skies by flaming boulders and armies were swallowed by oceans of molten rock.

At the same time, an empyric shock wave thundered from the detonating Choral Engine and out through the system, ripping the fabric of reality to tatters. Many warships, loyalist and heretic alike, were snatched out of realspace and sent tumbling through the warp. Some emerged eventually in other places and other times; others were never seen again. Those vessels not dislocated instead bore the brunt of Malakbael's apocalyptic demise, the rapidly expanding cloud of debris bludgeoning and perforating them. Malakra, already burning, was struck by a continent-sized chunk of Malakbael. All remaining life on the planet's surface died within minutes. Malakvar and even distant Malakshet suffered punishing debris storms that scarred their hides and fouled their atmospheres. Admiral Aquilant Pell and his surviving ships, racing headlong to relieve the Imperial forces above Malakbael, ploughed headlong into the explosion and suffered dreadful losses.

Even so, the dead were arguably the lucky ones. They were spared the Murder-curse. The immense bloodletting of the Battle of Malak provided the sacrificial offering, however unwittingly given. Angron himself acted as the sacrificial blade, while the energies of the Choral Engine were the medium by which the summoned energies flowed. The supernatural punishment for sorcerous mortal meddling was made manifest.

Those still trapped in the Malak System were the first to feel the curse take hold. One moment mortal combatants were striving to rescue trapped comrades, to evade the murderous demise of Malakbael, or to strike the killing blows in their own hard-fought conflicts. The next, many of their number reeled in shock, shuddering and panting as their eyes filmed over with blood and their veins stood out like blue-black ropes beneath their flesh. One after another the accursed threw back their heads and howled with rage before hurling themselves upon the nearest living beings. They no longer recognised friend from foe. They could not speak, except to scream out the praises of Khorne the Blood God. Some turned their guns on those around them, or unleashed the mighty weapons of the war engines they crewed. Others cast aside their weaponry in favour of falling upon their victims with fists and teeth.

Evacuation pilots bellowed with fury, flying headlong into the midst of those they had sought to rescue even as those same evacuees turned upon one another in murderous rage. Fleeing warships faltered in the void as maddened crewmen battled each other, or fired the armaments of their vessels at anything under their gunsights, be it friend or enemy. Not all fell to the curse, however. Seemingly random individuals were spared its touch only to suffer the full horror of their twisted former allies turning upon them. Howls of bloodlust echoed through the agri-caverns of Malakshet amidst the clangour of blades and the bark of boltguns. On Malakvar, loyalist tanks ploughed through formations of their own brawling infantry, firing wildly at all and sundry until they were themselves destroyed by point-blank heavy weapons fire. On the bridge of his flagship, Admiral Aquilant Pell ended his illustrious career being eaten alive by his own rabid crew. The slaughter was nightmarish and unrelenting.

Through this madness and destruction sailed Vashtorr the Arkifane, stood astride the *Stygian Heart* and untouched by the butchery playing out all around him.

THE ARKIFANE'S PRIZE

Firmly in control of the *Stygian Heart* and its systems, Vashtorr rode like some infernal boatman into the maelstrom of devastation. He made unerringly for the carcass of Malakbael, employing the manifold weapons batteries of

the Ark of Omen to blast himself a path through the ruination. Eyes glowing with concentration, Vashtorr snatched drifting shipwrecks and fragments of defence platforms from the void as he went, some still with maddened mortals battling on board. These he melded into ablative shields, calculating precise angles of interlock and deflection so as to absorb and divert the impact of the largest fragments of Malakbael.

The Arkifane was unaffected by the Murder-curse – he was no mortal, and did not suffer their weaknesses. Moreover, those aboard the *Stygian Heart* had been shielded as Vashtorr's power permeated the vast ship. The Arkifane could sense them even now, making one desperate effort after another to regain control of their vessel or to push troops onto its upper hull to reach him. It was no great effort for the Arkifane to seal bulkheads in their path, to turn interior defence systems against them or raise golems of fleshmetal and gears to drive the outraged Heretic Astartes back. Yet the longer they strove against him, the more the former masters of the *Stygian Heart* intrigued Vashtorr. They were inventive, cunning and determined. Warp cogs span within his mind. Potential designs grew with fractal complexity to fashion machineries of cause and effect. Coming to sudden decision, Vashtorr gathered a portion of his power and – with a rap of his hammer's haft against the hull of the ship – spirited the surviving Tomeweavers away through the warp. He had spaces in his machinations for such resourceful and intelligent servants. He would offer them a suitable bargain and they would form an admirable cog amidst one of his artfully engineered mechanisms.

For now, though, another more pressing task lay before Vashtorr. As the wrack and ruin tumbled aside he saw the broken husk of Malakbael ahead of him. The world had cracked in half along the deep fissures dug by the Choral Engine's geothermal Syphon Coil. Malakbael's molten core had spilled forth to cool and harden in the void. Vashtorr gave a contemptuous grunt when he saw the vented matter had formed a titanic rune of Khorne. Such acts of divine showmanship Vashtorr considered gauche. Refocusing, he picked out the psychic song of that which he had come to find now radiating from the dead heart of the broken world. With a thought he guided the Ark of Omen towards it.

The closer Vashtorr came to the husk of Malakbael, the harder it became to protect his vessel. Huge boulders slammed into its structure from every side. Piece by piece the *Stygian Heart* began to come apart. Grumbling to himself, Vashtorr manipulated the vessel's structure and dragged its warp portal to the fore, the Ark peeling open like a nightmarish flower to allow its passage. Fashioning a dense shield of melded metal around the portal, Vashtorr ripped away other sections of the hulk to form a stairway onto which he stepped. As he advanced, towing the warp portal in his wake, so Vashtorr's fleshmetal stairway split apart behind him and reassembled in front. It stretched up into Malakbael's eviscerated corpse, to where the warpsong sang out to Vashtorr.

At last, deep within the hard shadow cast by the cored-out world, he stood before a cooling igneous rock face where a tank-sized chunk of some darker stone protruded. How the foreign body had endured millennia amidst the unimaginable temperatures and pressures near the core of a world, no mortal scientist could have said. Vashtorr knew. Indeed, he found the process intellectually fascinating. It was not relevant to his task, however, and so – rather than muse upon this rock's passage through history and reality – the Arkifane raised his hammer and swung a mighty blow.

Coruscating energies raced out from the impact. Blast debris struck the shielding around Vashtorr's shuddering warp portal, and the resultant explosions signalled that soon even the artifice of the Arkifane would not survive this inimical place. Vashtorr reached out one taloned hand and took hold of the dark mass of stone. From within it echoed the song that had called to him for so long. This, he thought, would be the cornerstone of his design. With care bordering on reverence, Vashtorr pushed against the dense mass and guided it through the flickering skin of the warp portal. He took a last look around and nodded to himself, a workman pleased with his efforts. Then the Arkifane stepped through the surface of the warp portal and was gone.

FALL OF QUARTUS

The psychic channels that had so benefited Fleet Quartus bore the corrupting energies of the Murder-curse out across immense distances. Carmine shock waves of psychosis and mutation burst – quite literally – from receiving Astropaths and Navigators in dozens of star systems, engulfing task force after task force. Eighty percent of Battle Groups Alphae, Betaris, Dominus, Forthrax, Irasmus, Jovia and Kilox succumbed. Primaris Space Marines, Battle Sisters and even priests and Inquisitors fell along with common soldiery and serfs. Only the Grey Knights, Sisters of Silence and Custodians proved truly immune. At a stroke, Indomitus Fleet Quartus was not only mortally wounded, but much of its still-colossal strength turned traitor. The consequences were dire indeed; hordes of corrupted killers began murderous rampages in Khorne's name, cutting bloody swathes through recently stabilised regions of the Imperium Sanctus. It was not long before the entire Fourth Fleet was declared Excommunicate Traitoris. Millions of loyal Imperial warriors found themselves condemned for deeds they had had no part in. It was a betrayal that would have far-reaching consequences for years to come.

Luca is the senior ordnance adept aboard the command Leviathan of General Ernsgaart. He is rightfully proud of his role, as any good Volpone soldier should be. The vehicle is advancing at the heart of a formation of five massed Volpone regiments, both infantry and armour. They are the heart of the hammer blow – Ernsgaart's words – that will finally crush the heretics and reclaim Deng-Var City. Luca has heard Ernsgaart and her aides talking. He knows that once Deng-Var falls, all of Garvetha Prime will be theirs. And that world is the key to retaking the entire system. Winning here will secure wider victory for Task Force IX of Battle Group Jovia, its third conquest in a row. Truly, thinks Luca, the light of Abcondis' beacon has proven a blessing for them all.

Something is happening around the astropathic shrine at the back of the command bridge. Astropath Nori's grey-robed acolytes are agitated. Several have vanished through the heavy velvet curtain into the shrine, and Luca can hear Nori raving even over the bustle of the bridge. Luca hates Nori for being a witch, never mind what a potent strategic asset the man's mind may be. He can't quite suppress the uncharitable hope that Nori is suffering.

A crimson blast of energy erupts from the astropathic sanctum. It is there and gone so swiftly that Luca barely registers it. He is left bewildered, half risen from his throne, craning around to see what is happening. He wonders guiltily if his ill wishes towards Nori have manifested. He sees acolytes and bridge officers alike staggering, shuddering, clutching their temples. General Ernsgaart is down on one knee, shaking her head as though to clear it. Adepts slump in their thrones, or rise and hasten solicitously to their comrades' aid.

Luca is about to do the same when heat prickles his skin. Agony splits his skull. It feels as though someone is hammering nails into his brain one after another. Luca's vision swims, everything turning crimson. He reels to his feet, then falls and crashes against his console. His groan of agony rises to a shriek as unreasoning fury races through him like wildfire, and he clenches his fists until his knuckles crack. Unable to restrain himself, Luca smashes a fist into his station monitor, plastiglass crunching and cutting his skin.

Luca is dimly aware of voices around him, screaming, howling, roaring like animals. There's a shout of panic. A gunshot follows. Somebody shouts for help as fists smack into flesh and comrades hurl themselves at one another with yells of hate and rage. Luca tries to speak but the words that burst from his lips are not those he intended.

'Hnnngskulls... forrrr... Khorne!'

The last coherent thought Luca has, as the command bridge descends into violent anarchy around him, is that he is going to rip Nori's throat out with his teeth.

Luca slams his fist down again upon his instruments before launching himself into the bloody melee. His blow catches the manual awakening override, sending a signal pulse racing through the Leviathan's systems. Warning lumen flick to crimson on the gun deck, bathing brawling crewmen in blood-red light in the moment before the Leviathan's main gun discharges.

A shell the size of a Taurox APC bursts from the barrel of the Leviathan's prow cannon. It sails over the ranks of once-proud Volpone soldiery, who are even now turning on one another with guns, blades, fists and teeth. The shell slams down amidst a company of Volpone 164th Chimera transports. Until moments earlier these vehicles were performing a steady advance upon the hab-blocks of Deng-Var City's fringe. They were moments from overrunning the hastily thrown-up traitor barricades blocking progress along Processional 848 towards the Deng-Var Innerdistricts. Several APCs are vaporised in the blast. Others are hurled onto their roofs, or slew to a stop ablaze.

Volpone soldiers spill from the wrecked vehicles. Some are burning, others so hideously wounded they should not be able to stand, let alone fight. Yet fight they do. Amongst them is Sergeant Anders Drake, who has survived eight years of the God-Emperor's wars. Drake never revelled in lambasting his soldiers like some of his peers. He felt the responsibility of their care. Now he bellows in rage as he fires his bolt pistol into his Voxman's gut and blows the man apart in a shower of viscera. Guardsman Ulvaska lunges at Drake, clutching a chunk of broken bayonet. Its ragged edge has sliced off two of her fingers. There are fangs pushing through the flesh around Ulvaska's blood-blister eyes. Drake takes the blade in his shoulder then smashes his gun muzzle between Ulvaska's teeth and blows out the back of her head.

'In Khorne's name!' Drake roars. Some of the Volpone – those lucid enough to clutch guns and fight like sentient beings – rally to his side. They move as a pack, snarling at one another, twitching and screaming as bolts of pain lance through their skulls. They turn their guns on Sergeant Haklyn's squad as the soldiers scramble from their Chimera. Drake and Haklyn have been firm friends for three years. Now Haklyn hurls himself upon Drake and drives talons into his old friend's eyes. The two Sergeants hit the ground, striving to end one another. They are both annihilated as a flight of Hawk Lords Stormtalons scream low overhead, firing indiscriminately.

The Stormtalons streak on over the Imperial positions then rake the traitors who are butchering one another behind their forgotten barricades. The Space Marine pilots weave their craft between looming hab-blocks, snarling into their vox-beads. Brother Uradus did not succumb to the Murder-curse, but his accursed comrades mobbed him and blasted him from the sky in moments. Brothers Armandus, Voldwyn and Korr have not attacked each other's craft. They fly as a pack, instinctively forming up on Voldwyn. Within his cockpit, Voldwyn has begun to meld with his controls. Wet red ropes of nerve and muscle stretch from cracks in his armour to invade the Stormtalon's instruments.

Voldwyn's pack streak over a maddened brawl that spills through the processionals around the Shrine of the God-Emperor Vigilant. A vanguard of the Order of Our Martyred Lady had pushed into enemy territory here. Their mission was twofold: protect the clergy taking sanctuary within the shrine, and keep the traitor forces occupied until the Volpone could roll in to overwhelm them. Now, Battle Sisters fight Battle Sisters while turncoat soldiers wrestle with blood-mad priests under the impassive eyes of saints wrought in stone.

Missiles streak up from an Exorcist battle tank, hitting Korr's Stormtalon. The craft careens through the roof of the shrine on a trail of flame. Its detonation blows out the stained glass effigy of Saint Heldrin the Gracious, filling the air with glittering glass blades.

Sister Kerenna turns away from the blast to shield her face. Glass shatters against her power armour. A fragment rips across her scalp, leaving a line of searing pain in its wake. Sister Kerenna has no time for pain. Her sisters have lost their minds. She does not understand what is happening, but she clings to her faith in the face of the horrors around her. Sister Helenica also passed the God-Emperor's test, but Sister Helenica now lies decapitated by the blade of a frothing Sister Repentia.

'Unforgiven,' spits Sister Kerenna, blasting the Repentia from her feet with a salvo of bolts.

Wrestling warriors jostle her. Blood spatters her face. Sister Kerenna cannot allow her will to break, because she knows that she has been spared for a purpose. She has always had an eye for the ebb and flow of battle. Canoness Felicita even said that Kerenna might succeed her in time. Felicita has devolved into a rabid butcher with horns sprouting from her eye sockets and a mouth of needle fangs, but Kerenna remains untainted, and she has seen a pattern in this madness. She sees the more lucid accursed gaining mastery of their weaker or more animalistic fellows amidst the fighting. Already packs are forming from the warring rabble. If the trend continues, Sister Kerenna feels certain that, once the slaughter subsides, what remains will be a vast and savage army of fallen souls. She is certain that this revelation is hers alone, her life preserved by the God-Emperor that she might act as his divine messenger. Sister Kerenna will carry the warning. She will-

The sister does not even feel her own death, so swiftly is she ripped apart in the blitzing hail of fire that rakes the shrine. Bonded to his war engine by the Mind Impulse Unit jack driven into the base of his skull, Princeps D'Genue screams at his Moderati to shoot, shoot, shoot until both the Warhound's vulcan mega bolters click dry. Blood pours from his haemorrhaging eyes, but D'Genue no longer needs them to see. He glares through the vid-feeds of *Venatoris Brutalor* and howls with his desperate need to wreak more slaughter.

D'Genue does not get the chance. A salvo of melta blasts and krak missiles tear from the windows of a nearby hab-block, targeting the Warhound's already damaged right knee joint. Cables rupture. Metal shears. Maimed, *Venatoris Brutalor* topples sideways to slam into another hab-block, then crashes to the ground.

Emerging from the hab-block in which they had lurked, Veteran Sergeant Klaudis and his battle-brothers prowl into the processional. Some are reloading their heavy weapons, the Titan's fall not nearly enough to sate their bloodlust. Klaudis has torn off his helm and cast it away. The Ultramarines insignia on his Mark X shoulder guards are smeared with bloody handprints. In one fist he wields his gore-clogged chainsword, in the other a severed head held by the hair. He no longer remembers whose it is, only that it is a worthy offering. Black veins criss-cross Klaudis' pale face around his blood-red eyes.

Klaudis sees the battle still raging beyond the now-burning wreck of the Titan, and jabs his blade that way to direct his warriors. His thoughts are hectic, boiling with rage, but Klaudis knows two things with absolute clarity. The first is that he will slaughter the weak and lead the strong. The second is that he will do this in the name of Khorne. Veteran Sergeant Klaudis throws back his head and gives vent to a ferocious battle cry before leading the charge into the heaving masses around the shrine.

'BLOOD FOR THE BLOOD GOD!'

BOARDING ACTION RULES

Over the following pages you will find bespoke rules for fielding each of the factions presented in this book. These rules are in addition to those found in *Arks of Omen: Abaddon* and work alongside the relevant Codexes. On the following pages you will find unique new Enhancements that can be taken by your **WARLORD**, additional Stratagems that can be used by your units, and any necessary adjustments to rules found in the relevant Codexes. With these powerful new options at your disposal, your Boarding Patrols will be able to wage their close-quarters warfare with a whole new level of savagery.

The factions found within this book are:

WORLD EATERS
PG 64-65

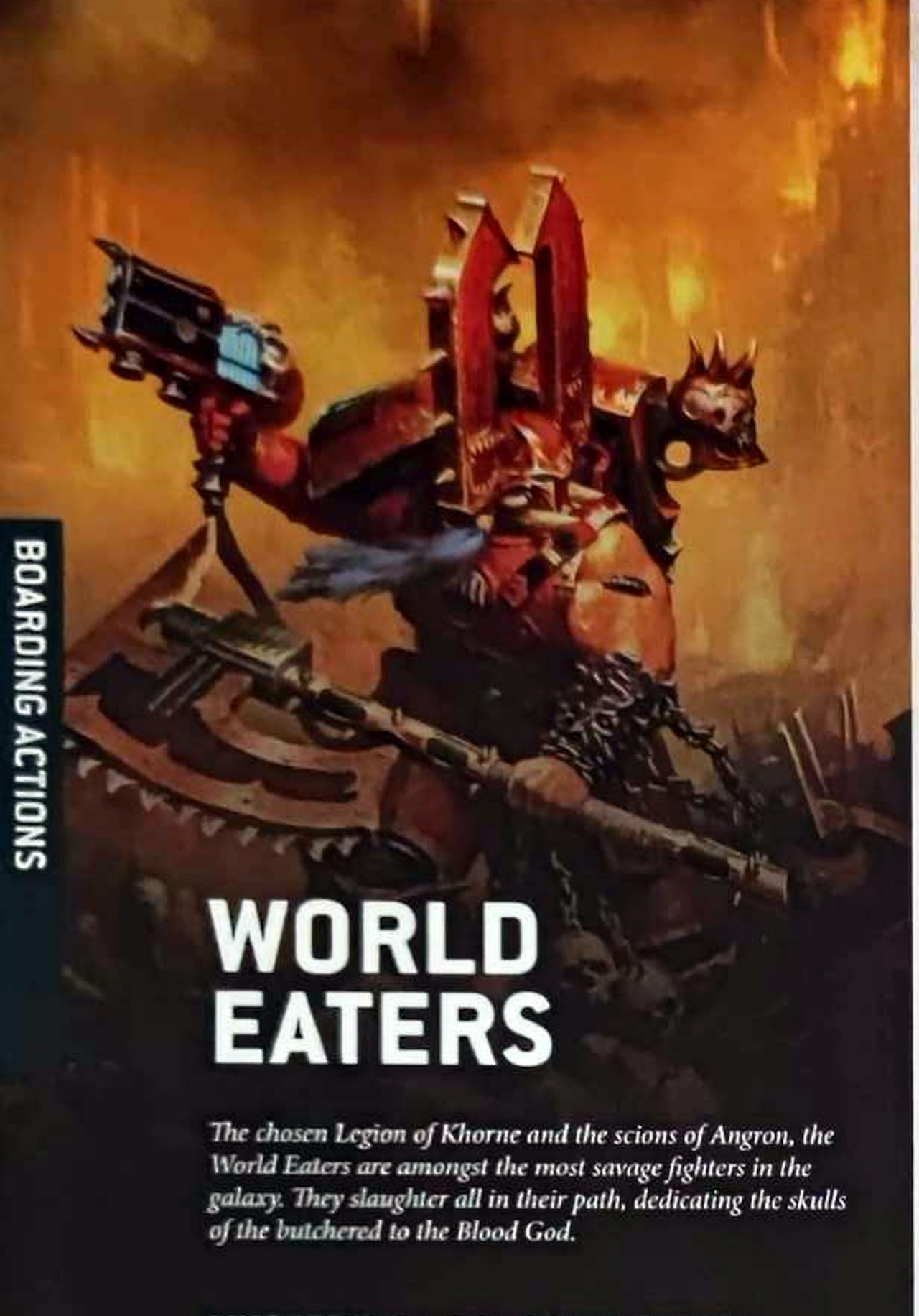
CHAOS SPACE MARINES
PG 66-71

SPACE MARINES
PG 72-77

GREY KNIGHTS
PG 78-79

ASTRA MILITARUM
PG 80-81

ORKS
PG 82-83



WORLD EATERS

The chosen Legion of Khorne and the scions of Angron, the World Eaters are amongst the most savage fighters in the galaxy. They slaughter all in their path, dedicating the skulls of the butchered to the Blood God.

MUSTERING A BOARDING PATROL

When mustering a Boarding Patrol, if your Faction is **WORLD EATERS**, then the following rules apply when adding units to your Boarding Patrol Detachment, and they take priority over the normal rules for mustering a Boarding Patrol.

- You can include one Fast Attack unit, but only if it is a **CHAOS SPAWN** unit.
- You cannot include more **CULTISTS** units than **KHORNE BERZERKERS** units.
- When forming Boarding Squads, do not split **CULTISTS** units into separate units.

RULES ADAPTATIONS

If your Faction is **WORLD EATERS**, then the following rules adaptations apply to World Eaters rules found in *Codex: World Eaters*.

- **KHÅRN THE BETRAYER**'s The Betrayer ability only affects friendly units that are visible to him.
- Each time a unit from your army is destroyed, you gain 1 Blood Tithe point.
- **KHORNE BERZERKER** units lose the Blood Surge ability while they are on the battlefield.

ENHANCEMENTS

If your **WARLORD** has the **WORLD EATERS** keyword, then when mustering your Boarding Patrol, they can be given one of the following Enhancements instead of one from *Arks of Omen: Abaddon*.

BATTLE LUST

This warrior's lust for battle draws him into any and all fights, his thirst driving him to new heights of battlefield frenzy.

The first time the bearer destroys an enemy model each phase, you gain 1 Blood Tithe point.

BURNING PLATE

This armour, nigh-impervious to enemy blows, drips constantly with hissing, molten brass.

- Add 1 to armour saving throws made for the bearer.
- Add 1 to the bearer's Wounds characteristic.

MUTABLE FORM

This warrior's body is constantly growing bladed horns, claws that drip with gore, or a whole host of other vicious adornments, rendering them a formidable killer.

- You can re-roll Advance rolls and charge rolls made for the bearer.
- Overwatch attacks cannot be made against the bearer.

BOARDING ACTION STRATAGEMS

If your Faction is **WORLD EATERS**, then when playing a Boarding Action game you will have access to the following Stratagems, and can spend CP to use them.

SAVAGE RESILIENCE 1CP

World Eaters – Boarding Actions – Battle Tactic Stratagem

In the heat of battle, World Eaters become almost oblivious to enemy fire, charging forward with little regard for even grievous injuries.

Use this Stratagem in your opponent's Shooting phase, when a **WORLD EATERS** unit is selected as the target of an attack. Until the end of the phase, each time a model in that unit would lose a wound, roll one D6: on a 5+, that wound is not lost.

GORY DISMEMBERMENT 1CP

World Eaters – Boarding Actions – Battle Tactic Stratagem

The World Eaters are not noble fighters. They hack their foes down with smashing blows, tear them apart with screaming chainaxes or fell them with tainted blades in the most brutal fashion imaginable.

Use this Stratagem in the Fight phase, when a **WORLD EATERS** model (excluding **CULTIST** models) from your army destroys a model in an enemy unit. Until the end of the turn, subtract 3 from the Leadership characteristic of models in that enemy unit and your opponent cannot re-roll any Morale tests taken for it.

BLOOD FRENZY 1CP

World Eaters – Boarding Actions – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

Even mortal wounds are insufficient to prevent a World Eater from spilling blood until his very last breath.

Use this Stratagem in the Fight phase, when an enemy unit is selected to fight. Select one **WORLD EATERS CORE** unit from your army that is within Engagement Range of that enemy unit. Until that enemy unit's attacks have been resolved, each time a model in that **WORLD EATERS CORE** unit is destroyed by a melee attack, if that model has not fought this phase, do not remove it from play. The destroyed model can fight after the attacking model's unit has finished making attacks, and is then removed from play.

THE DIRECT APPROACH 1CP

World Eaters – Boarding Actions – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

Even an armoured bulkhead provides no obstacle to the formidable advance of World Eaters Terminators.

Use this Stratagem at the start of your Movement phase or your Charge phase. Select one **WORLD EATERS TERMINATOR** or **EIGHTBOUND** unit from your army. Until the end of the phase, when making a Normal Move, an Advance or a charge move, that unit can move through a single closed Hatchway as if it was open. When doing so, that Hatchway is opened and cannot be closed for the rest of the battle. This can allow that unit to declare a charge against an enemy unit that is not visible to it, but to do so that enemy unit must be within 1" of that Hatchway.

SCORN OF SORCERY 1CP

World Eaters – Boarding Actions – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

Like the god they worship, the warriors of the World Eaters despise psykers and their trickery, and through the sheer force of their hatred can cause sorcerous powers to be undone.

Use this Stratagem in your opponent's Psychic phase, after a Psychic test is passed for an enemy **PSYKER** unit and after any Deny the Witch attempt is made. If that **PSYKER** unit is within 18" of and visible to any **WORLD EATERS** units from your army, roll one D6: on a 4+, that psychic power is denied.

WRATHFUL CHARGE 1CP

World Eaters – Boarding Actions – Wargear Stratagem

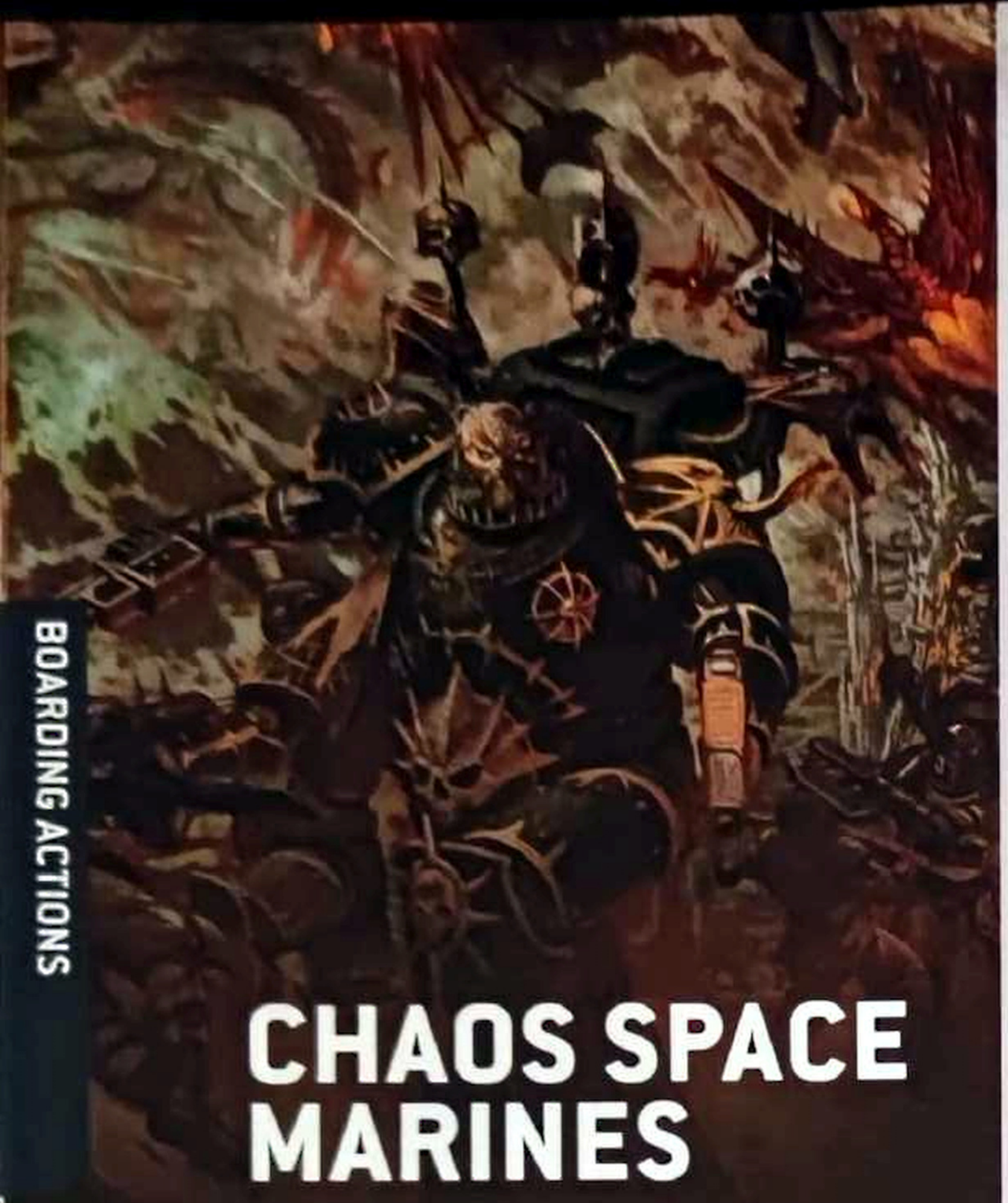
With unrestrained fury, the World Eaters bound forward to savage the foe with axes, swords and even their bare hands.

Use this Stratagem in your Charge phase, when a **WORLD EATERS** unit (excluding **CULTIST** units) from your army is selected to charge. Until the end of the phase:

- Each time you make a charge roll for that unit, roll one additional D6 and discard the lowest result.
- When making a charge move, models in that unit can move horizontally through other models (but cannot finish that move on top of another model, or its base).

'Pierce their spleens! Rip out their guts! Sever their limbs! Puncture their hearts! Hack them apart revelling in the eternal majesty of Kharne's bloody greatness! It is he who grants us battle, he who grants us war, he who grants us victory. This pleases him, my warriors, have no doubt. But do not anger him. Touch not the enemy's skulls, for they are his, and his alone. It is our honour to give them unto him for his throne. See the heads of the False Emperor's lackeys piled high, unspoiled.'

– Khargaron, the Crimson Butcher of Tengalin XIII



CHAOS SPACE MARINES

The Imperium's greatest foes, Chaos Space Marines combine the gifts of the Emperor's arcane science with the powers granted them by the Chaos Gods. Twisted by their heresy, they hate the Imperium, and seek only to destroy it.

MUSTERING A BOARDING PATROL

When mustering a Boarding Patrol, if your Faction is **TRAITORIS ASTARTES**, then the following rules apply when adding units to your Boarding Patrol Detachment, and they take priority over the normal rules for mustering a Boarding Patrol.

- All **<LEGION>** units in your Boarding Patrol must be from the same Legion.
- You can include one Fast Attack unit, but only if it is a **CHAOS SPAWN** unit.
- You can include up to two HQ units and up to two **CHARACTER** models, but only if one of them is a **DARK COMMUNE** unit.
- You can include more **CULTISTS** units than **TRAITORIS ASTARTES CORE INFANTRY** units, but no more than twice as many **CULTISTS** units as you have **TRAITORIS ASTARTES CORE INFANTRY** units.
- You cannot include more than one model equipped with a balefire tome (see the Legionaries datasheet in *Codex: Chaos Space Marines*).
- If you include a **TRAITORIS ASTARTES POSSESSED** unit, it can only have a Starting Strength of 5 models – additional models cannot be added to it.
- When forming Boarding Squads, do not split **CULTIST MOB** units into separate units.
- **ACCURSED CULTISTS** units must form Boarding Squads. When they do so, split the unit so all the Mutants are in one unit, and all the Torments are in the other unit.

RULES ADAPTATIONS

If your Faction is **TRAITORIS ASTARTES**, then the following rules adaptations apply to Chaos Space Marines rules found in *Codex: Chaos Space Marines*.

- If your Legion is not one of the following, then you can use the Enhancement and Stratagem associated with the Legion whose Legion rules you are using (pg 68-71): Black Legion, Red Corsairs, Night Lords, Alpha Legion, Iron Warriors, Creations of Bile, Word Bearers, Emperor's Children. If you do so, replace all instances of the keyword of that Legion where it appears on that Enhancement or Stratagem with the name of the Legion you are using.
- When an enemy model makes a ranged attack that targets a unit with the Masters of Duplicity Legion Trait, if the attacking model is more than 6" away from that target unit, that target unit is treated as having the benefits of cover against that attack.
- The *Warptime* psychic power has a warp charge value of 9.
- The *Possession* psychic power has a warp charge value of 8.

ENHANCEMENTS

If your **WARLORD** has the **TRAITORIS ASTARTES** keyword, then when mustering your Boarding Patrol, they can be given one of the following Enhancements instead of one from *Arks of Omen: Abaddon*.

TALISMAN OF BURNING BLOOD

This relic's charnel stench stokes the bearer's lust for slaughter.

KHORNE model only. Add 1 to the bearer's Attacks characteristic. Each time an enemy unit is destroyed by a melee attack made by the bearer, until the end of the battle, add an additional 1 to the bearer's Attacks characteristic.

EYE OF TZEENTCH

This eye looks into the future, seeing what lies there. With such knowledge is the bearer well equipped to meet what comes to pass.

TZEENTCH model only. Each time a Psychic test or Deny the Witch test is made for the bearer, add 1 to that Psychic test or Deny the Witch test.

PUTRESCENT ARMOUR

Few are the blows that can pierce this decaying plate, even while rivers of pus gush from its cracks.

NURGLE model only. Each time an attack is allocated to the bearer, subtract 1 from the Damage characteristic of that attack (to a minimum of 1).

INTOXICATING ELIXIR

Pain fades and wounds heal when this potion is imbibed.

SLAANESH model only. The bearer cannot lose more than 3 wounds during any single phase. Any wounds that would be lost after that point are not lost.

BOARDING ACTION STRATAGEMS

If your Faction is **TRAITORIS ASTARTES**, then when playing a Boarding Action game you will have access to the following Stratagems, and can spend CP to use them.

ETERNAL HATRED 1CP/2CP

Chaos Space Marines – Boarding Actions – Battle Tactic Stratagem

The hatred the warriors of the Traitor Legions hold for the Imperium and the Emperor has burned for millennia.

Use this Stratagem in your Shooting phase, when a **TRAITORIS ASTARTES** unit from your army is selected to shoot, or in the Fight phase, when a **TRAITORIS ASTARTES** unit from your army is selected to fight. Until the end of the phase, each time a model in that unit makes an attack, add 1 to that attack's wound roll. If that unit has the **TERMINATOR** or **POSSESSED** keyword, this Stratagem costs 2CP; otherwise, it costs 1CP.

GIFTS OF THE PLAGUE GOD 1CP/2CP

Chaos Space Marines – Boarding Actions – Battle Tactic Stratagem

Grandfather Nurgle is eager to bestow daemonic fecundity upon his faithful servants, sealing their gaping wounds with pulsating growths and replacing their spilt blood with curdling ichor.

Use this Stratagem in any phase, when a **TRAITORIS ASTARTES NURGLE** unit from your army is selected as the target of an attack. Until the end of the phase, each time an attack is made against that unit, an unmodified wound roll of 1-3 for that attack fails, irrespective of any abilities that the weapon or the model making the attack may have. If that unit has the **TERMINATOR** keyword, this Stratagem costs 2CP; otherwise, it costs 1CP.

THE GREAT SORCERER 1CP

Chaos Space Marines – Boarding Actions – Epic Deed Stratagem

Those not driven mad by the worship of Tzeentch are given the power to harness the energies of the warp like no other, so long as this gift is used against the Great Mutator's enemies.

Use this Stratagem at the start of your Psychic phase. Select one **TRAITORIS ASTARTES TZEENTCH PSYKER** unit from your army. That unit can attempt to manifest one additional psychic power this phase.

SHIPBOARD INSURRECTION 1CP

Chaos Space Marines – Boarding Actions – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

The Heretic Astartes have embedded loyal Cultists amongst the crew of the target ship. These devoted men and women know the ship intimately, and are well placed to guide their masters to its most vital areas once aboard.

Use this Stratagem in your Movement phase, when a **TRAITORIS ASTARTES CULTISTS** unit from your army finishes a Normal Move. You can open one Hatchway that is within 1" of that unit. Your opponent cannot attempt to prevent that Hatchway from opening.

SCORN OF SORCERY 1CP

Chaos Space Marines – Boarding Actions – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

Like the god they worship, the warriors of Khorne despise psykers and their trickery, and through the sheer force of their hatred can cause sorcerous powers to be undone.

Use this Stratagem in your opponent's Psychic phase, after a Psychic test is passed for an enemy **PSYKER** unit and after any Deny the Witch attempt is made. If that **PSYKER** unit is within 18" of and visible to any **TRAITORIS ASTARTES KHORNE** units from your army, roll one D6: on a 4+, that psychic power is denied.

TERRIFYING PHENOMENA 1CP

Chaos Space Marines – Boarding Actions – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

The Chaos Space Marines march to war with the warp as their ally. In their presence walls run with blood, and the land itself seems haunted, preying on their foes' worst fears and driving them insane with terror.

Use this Stratagem at the start of the Morale phase. Select one enemy unit within 12" of a **TRAITORIS ASTARTES CHAOS UNDIVIDED** unit from your army.

- Until the end of the phase, your opponent cannot select that unit for the Insane Bravery Stratagem and cannot use any rule that would let them re-roll a Morale test for that unit.
- If that unit fails a Morale test this phase, any action it is performing immediately fails and, until the start of its controlling player's next Morale phase, models in that unit are ignored when determining control of objective markers.

STUPEFYING HAZE 1CP

Chaos Space Marines – Boarding Actions – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

Many warriors of Slaanesh exude an overpowering musk that is as nauseating as it is intoxicating. Those exposed to it find their senses dulled, their minds unravelling into a state of nightmarish bliss that leaves them bewildered and ripe for slaughter.

Use this Stratagem when an enemy unit that is within Engagement Range of a **TRAITORIS ASTARTES SLAANESH** unit from your army is selected to Fall Back. Roll 2D6: if the result is equal to or greater than that enemy unit's Leadership characteristic, that enemy unit cannot Fall Back this phase and must Remain Stationary instead.

ALPHA LEGION

CULT LEADER

All Alpha Legion operatives are highly trained and well equipped, even those mortal Cultists who may at first glance appear to be little more than chaff. The foe underestimates these cold-eyed killers at their risk.

ALPHA LEGION model only. In your Command phase, you can select one friendly **ALPHA LEGION** unit within 9" of the bearer. Until the start of your next Command phase, each time a model in that unit makes an attack:

- Add 1 to that attack's hit roll.
- If that unit has the **CULTISTS** keyword, improve the Armour Penetration characteristic of that attack by 1.

SUBLIME INFILTRATION 1CP

Chaos Space Marines – Alpha Legion – Boarding Actions – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

More illusive than shadows, the Alpha Legion are amongst the keenest infiltrators in the galaxy.

Use this Stratagem in your Movement phase, when an **ALPHA LEGION** unit from your army is set up within an Entry Zone. That unit can make a Normal Move of up to 6".

CREATIONS OF BILE

TWISTED REGENERATION

So deep are the modifications Fabius Bile has made to some of his creations that their biology barely responds to the laws of physics. They can rise again from the most terrible wounds, returning to fight their master's horrified foes once more.

CREATIONS OF BILE model only. Once per battle, when the bearer is destroyed, you can roll one D6 at the end of the phase instead of using any rules that are triggered when the bearer is destroyed. If you do so, then on a 2+, set the bearer back up on the battlefield as close as possible to where it was destroyed but not within Engagement Range of any enemy models, with D3 wounds remaining.

TAKEN ALIVE 1CP

Chaos Space Marines – Creations of Bile – Boarding Actions – Epic Deed Stratagem

To be snatched away for experimentation by Fabius Bile and his creations is a truly horrifying fate.

Use this Stratagem in the Fight phase, when an enemy **CHARACTER** unit is destroyed by a melee attack made by a **TRAITORIS ASTARTES** unit from your army. Until the end of the battle:

- Subtract 1 from the Leadership characteristic of every enemy model.
- Your opponent cannot use the Insane Bravery Stratagem.
- Your opponent cannot use the Command Re-roll Stratagem to re-roll a Morale test.

'I am a seeker of truths and answers. It is an agonising quest, one my... critics do not understand the pain of. Each riddle of the universe I selve merely sprouts three more, each more difficult and convoluted than the enigma from which it descends. My quest is unending, and thus must be my supply of suitable resources also.'

- Fabius Bile

BLACK LEGION

MURDEROUS VERSATILITY

The Black Legion employ whatever diabolical tactics will maximise their foes' slaughter in that moment.

BLACK LEGION model only. In your Command phase, you can select one friendly **BLACK LEGION** unit within 9" of the bearer, then select one wanton act (see *Codex: Chaos Space Marines*). If you do so, then until the start of your next Command phase, each time a model in that selected unit makes an attack, its unit is considered to be engaged in that selected wanton act for that attack, instead of any other wanton act.

CRUSADERS OF DARKNESS 1CP

Chaos Space Marines – Black Legion – Boarding Actions – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

Marching relentlessly onward, the Black Legion sweep aside those enemies who dare contest their martial prizes.

Use this Stratagem in the Fight phase, when a **BLACK LEGION CORE** or **BLACK LEGION CHARACTER** unit from your army is selected to fight. Until the end of the phase, each time a model in that unit makes an attack that targets an enemy unit within range of an objective marker, improve the Armour Penetration characteristic of that attack by 1.

EMPEROR'S CHILDREN

STIMULATED BY PAIN

Not even a fatal wound is enough to prevent the Emperor's Children from indulging in their violent acts. Indeed, suffering only empowers them.

EMPEROR'S CHILDREN model only. For each wound the bearer has lost, add 1 to its Attacks characteristic. If the bearer regains any lost wounds, it loses the bonus attacks it had gained from those lost wounds.

COMBAT ELIXIRS 2CP

Chaos Space Marines – Emperor's Children – Boarding Actions – Wargear Stratagem

These carefully brewed substances lend the Heretic Astartes who consume them speed and strength even in excess of their post-human capabilities.

Use this Stratagem in the Fight phase, when an **EMPEROR'S CHILDREN CORE** or **EMPEROR'S CHILDREN CHARACTER** unit from your army is selected to fight. Until the end of the phase, add 1 to the Strength characteristic of models in that unit and improve the Weapon Skill characteristic of models in that unit by 1.

IRON WARRIORS

IRON WITHOUT

The resolute sons of Perturabo have been hardened by the grinding hell of countless sieges.

IRON WARRIORS model only. Add 2 to the Toughness characteristic of the bearer.

DOUR DUTY 1CP

Chaos Space Marines – Iron Warriors – Boarding Actions – Battle Tactic Stratagem

From trench warfare to boarding actions, the Iron Warriors meet the grim likelihood of death head on, and often emerge victorious.

Use this Stratagem in any phase, when an **IRON WARRIORS CORE** unit from your army is selected as the target of an attack. Until the end of the phase, each time an attack is allocated to a **HERETIC ASTARTES** model in that unit, subtract 1 from the Damage characteristic of that attack (to a minimum of 1).

'When my sons came to me, I saw only weakness. Like the deformed limb that must first be broken to be remade, so I forged my Legion anew. Each warrior was to partake in this great renewal, in life or in death. What I created was a Legion unlike any other. Remorseless; enduring; unstoppable. No matter the fortress, we could take it down. No matter the deadlock, we could shatter it. One thing did my warriors have to accept: total victory was the only victory, no matter the cost, even if the ending of their life was what it took to achieve it. When my foes look upon my armies, they see hosts that will fight to the last to see them crushed to dust.'

- Perturabo, Daemon Primarch of the Iron Warriors

NIGHT LORDS

ONE WITH THE SHADOWS

The Night Lords know that a foe unseen is a foe feared most. They are sly fighters, quick to fight dirty and stab in the back. Rarely do they present themselves as targets to their enemies, striking unexpectedly before melting back into darkness.

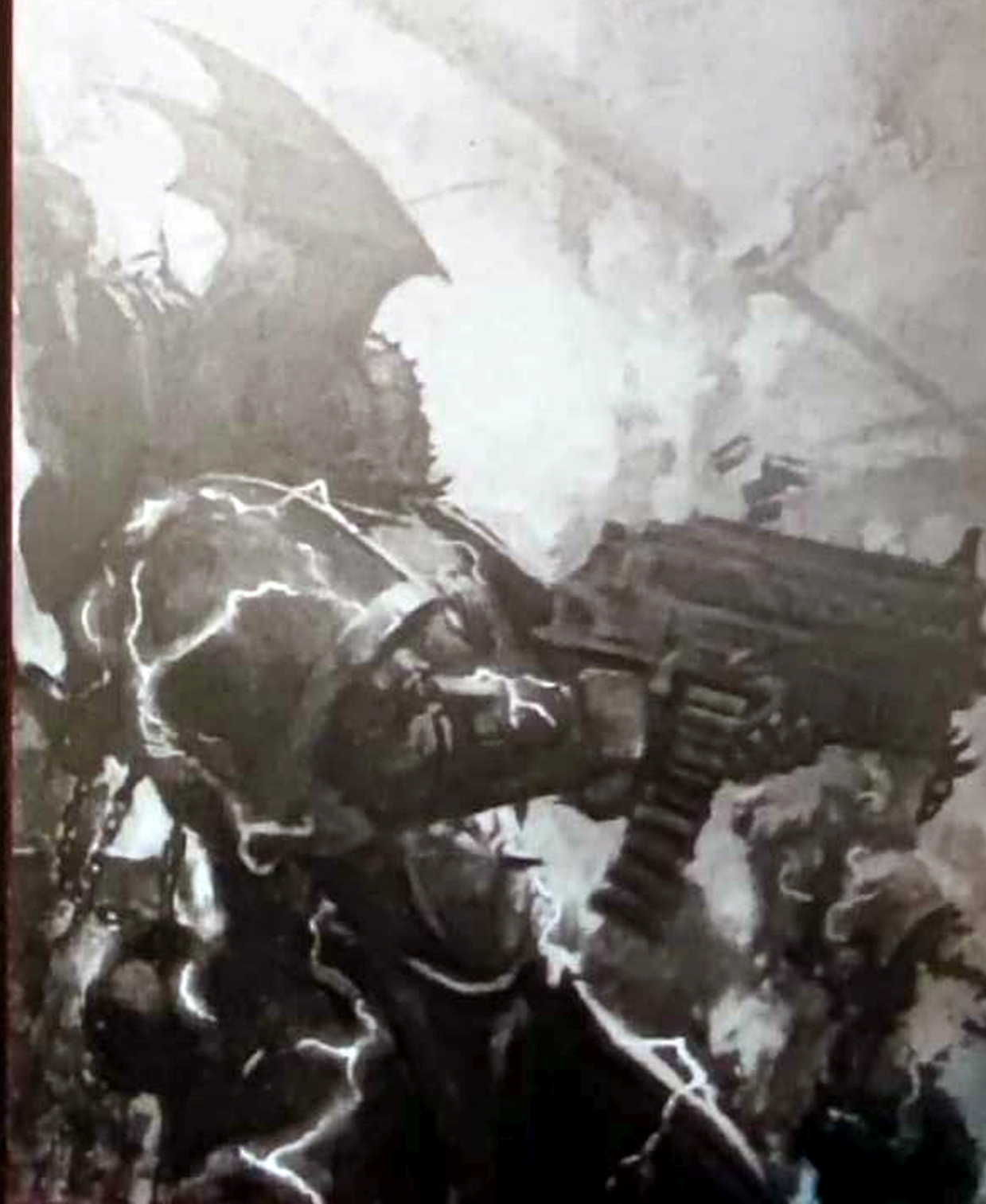
NIGHT LORDS model only. Each time an attack is made against the bearer, subtract 1 from that attack's hit roll and that hit roll cannot be re-rolled.

IN MIDNIGHT CLAD 1CP

Chaos Space Marines – Night Lords – Boarding Actions – Battle Tactic Stratagem

Having fought countless campaigns of terror in complete darkness, the Night Lords know how to make an ally of the shadows.

Use this Stratagem in your opponent's Shooting phase, when a **NIGHT LORDS CORE** or **NIGHT LORDS CHARACTER** unit from your army is selected as the target of a ranged attack. Until the end of the phase, each time a ranged attack is made against that unit, subtract 1 from that attack's hit roll.



RED CORSAIRS

DARK RAIDER

Conductors of lightning-fast raids and cut-throat assaults, the Red Corsairs know when best to surge forward to seize the initiative or retreat.

RED CORSAIRS model only. In your Command phase, you can select one friendly **RED CORSAIRS CORE** unit within 9" of the bearer. At the end of your next Shooting phase, that unit can make a Normal Move of up to 6", but if it does so, that unit is not eligible to declare a charge this turn.

SECURE THE PRIZE — 1CP

Chaos Space Marines – Red Corsairs – Boarding Actions – Battle Tactic Stratagem

The Red Corsairs are raiders with few equals, and never willingly abandon a prize when it is close to hand.

Use this Stratagem in any phase, when a **RED CORSAIRS CORE** unit from your army that is within range of an objective marker is selected as the target of an attack. Until the end of the phase, each time an attack with a Damage characteristic of 1 is allocated to a model in that unit, add 1 to any armour saving throw made against that attack.

'It would be all too easy to dismiss me as one who divides and corrodes. Yet look at what I have accomplished. I am a uniter, a bringer together of disparate souls into an endlessly diverse host of the lost, the damned and the vengeful. Former Space Wolves and Dark Angels fight side by side beneath my banner, as do scions of Angron and Fulgrim. Vagabonds, pirates and raiders who were at each other's throats in the Maelstrom for centuries now break bread and drink amasec together in the halls seized from the Corpse-Emperor's weak lackeys – all because of my leadership, my vision. All are united as Red Corsairs, putting aside petty differences to accomplish deeds once thought impossible and overthrow enemies once thought invincible.'

– Huron Blackheart, Lord of the Red Corsairs

WORD BEARERS

DAEMONIC POSSESSION

Above all other Traitor Legions and renegade warbands, the warriors of the Word Bearers welcome the denizens of the empyrean into their bodies.

WORD BEARERS model only.

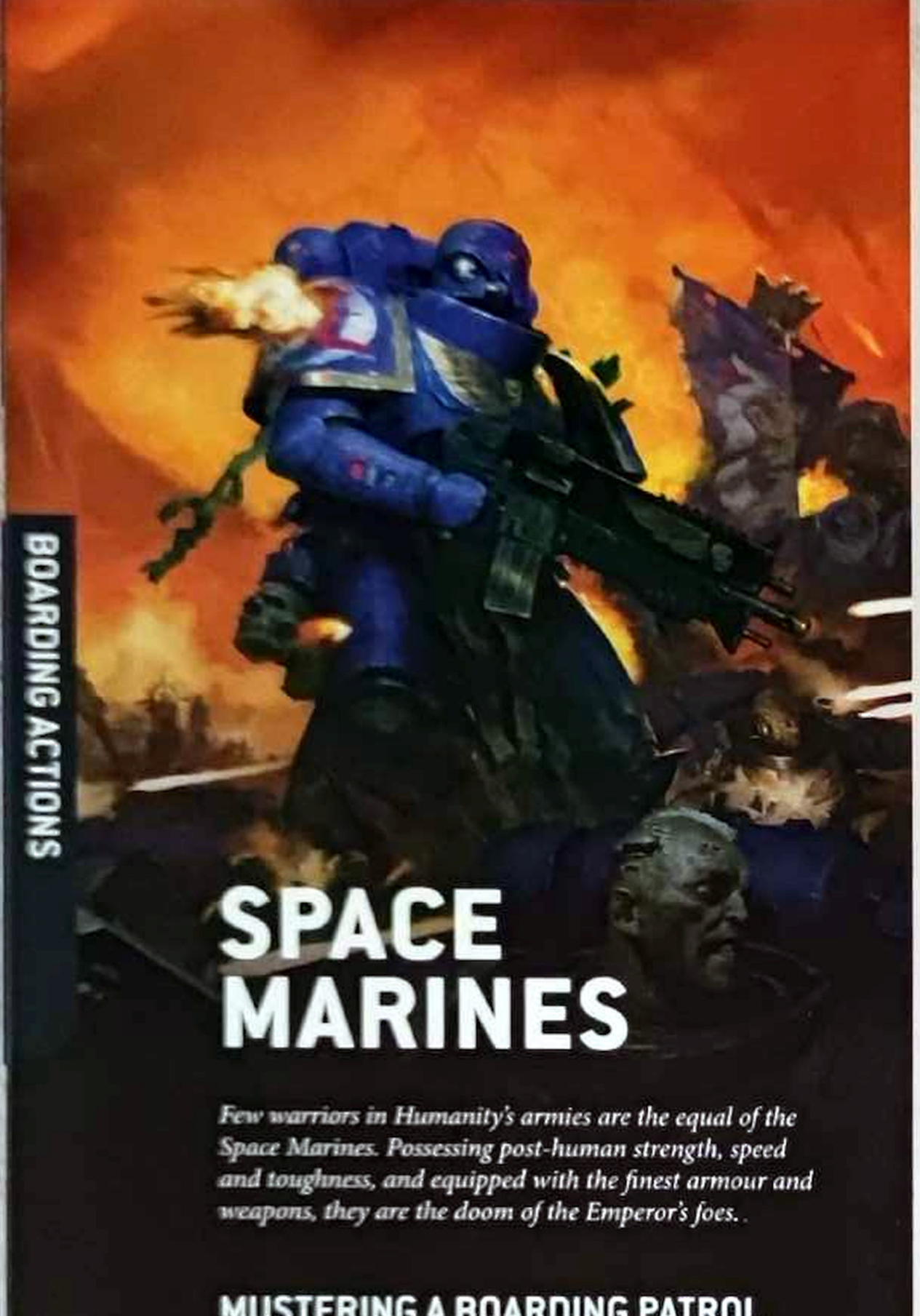
- Add 3" to the bearer's Move characteristic.
- Each time the bearer makes a pile-in or consolidation move, it can move up to an additional 3". This is not cumulative with any other rule that increases the distance models can pile in or consolidate.

HEXAGRAMMATIC WARDS — 2CP

Chaos Space Marines – Word Bearers – Boarding Actions – Wargear Stratagem

Diabolical wards of protection can turn aside the enemy's blows, and every Word Bearer's armour is covered in dark script devoted to the Chaos Gods.

Use this Stratagem in any phase, when an attack is allocated to a **WORD BEARERS** model from your army. The Damage characteristic of that attack is changed to 0.



SPACE MARINES

Few warriors in Humanity's armies are the equal of the Space Marines. Possessing post-human strength, speed and toughness, and equipped with the finest armour and weapons, they are the doom of the Emperor's foes.

MUSTERING A BOARDING PATROL

When mustering a Boarding Patrol, if your Faction is **ADEPTUS ASTARTES**, then the following rules apply when adding units to your Boarding Patrol Detachment, and they take priority over the normal rules for mustering a Boarding Patrol.

- All **<CHAPTER>** units in your Boarding Patrol must be from the same Chapter.
- You can include one Lord of War unit, but only if it is a **PRIMARCH** unit.
- You can include one Fast Attack unit, but only if it is an **ASSAULT SQUAD** unit that is not equipped with jump packs or a **FENRISIAN WOLVES** unit. If you include a **FENRISIAN WOLVES** unit, it can only have a Starting Strength of 5 models – additional models cannot be added to it.
- You can include one Heavy Support unit, but only if it is a **HELLBLASTER SQUAD** or an **ERADICATOR SQUAD** unit. If you include a **HELLBLASTER SQUAD** unit, it can only have a Starting Strength of 5 models – additional models cannot be added to it.
- You can only add one **COMPANY VETERANS** unit if your Boarding Patrol Detachment includes at least one **CAPTAIN** model. This unit must have a Starting Strength of 5 models.
- You can only add one **SERVITORS** unit if your Boarding Patrol Detachment includes a **TECHMARINE** model.

RULES ADAPTATIONS

If your Faction is **ADEPTUS ASTARTES**, then the following rules adaptations apply to Space Marines rules found in *Codex: Space Marines* and *Codex: Space Wolves*.

- The Combat Squads rule does not apply. Instead, units split by forming Boarding Squads.
- If your Chapter is not one of the following, then you can use the Enhancement and Stratagem associated with the Chapter your Chapter is a successor of (pg 74-77): Ultramarines, White Scars, Dark Angels, Blood Angels, Flesh Tearers, Imperial Fists, Crimson Fists, Black Templars, Iron Hands, Salamanders, Raven Guard, Deathwatch, Space Wolves. If you do so, replace all instances of the keyword of that Chapter where it appears on that Enhancement or Stratagem with the name of the Chapter you are using.
- When an enemy model makes a ranged attack that targets a unit with the Shadow Masters or Stealthy Chapter Tactics, if the attacking model is more than 6" away from that target unit, that target unit is treated as having the benefits of cover against that attack.
- **FENRISIAN WOLVES** units cannot perform actions.
- Models with the Outflank ability lose that ability for the battle.

ENHANCEMENTS

If your **WARLORD** has the **ADEPTUS ASTARTES** keyword, then when mustering your Boarding Patrol, they can be given one of the following Enhancements instead of one from *Arks of Omen: Abaddon*.

THE IMPERIUM'S BLADE

This formidable warrior is an exemplar of the ideals of the Adeptus Astartes.

Add 1 to the bearer's Attacks characteristic and add 1 to charge rolls made for the bearer.

MASTERS OF WAR

Beyond mere warrior skill, Space Marines are careful students of war, masters of strategy and tactics.

In your Command phase, you can select one friendly **ADEPTUS ASTARTES CORE** unit within 9" of the bearer. Until the start of your next Command phase, that unit has the Objective Secured ability (see the Warhammer 40,000 Core Book). If a model in that unit already has this ability, that model counts as one additional model when determining control of an objective marker.

ARTIFICER ARMOUR

Not only is this armour ornately decorated, it also provides superlative protection to the wearer.

The bearer has a Save characteristic of 2+ and a 4+ invulnerable save.

BOARDING ACTION STRATAGEMS

If your Faction is **ADEPTUS ASTARTES**, then when playing a Boarding Action game you will have access to the following Stratagems, and can spend CP to use them.

TRANSHUMAN PHYSIOLOGY 1CP

Adeptus Astartes – Boarding Actions – Battle Tactic Stratagem

Space Marines can fight through even the most grievous of wounds.

Use this Stratagem in any phase, when a **PRIMARIS** unit from your army is selected as the target of an attack. Until the end of the phase, each time an attack is made against that unit, an unmodified wound roll of 1-3 for that attack fails, irrespective of any abilities that the weapon or the model making the attack may have.

ONLY IN DEATH DOES DUTY END 1CP

Adeptus Astartes – Boarding Actions – Epic Deed Stratagem

Imminent death does not prevent a Space Marine from enacting his final justice upon the enemies of the Imperium.

Use this Stratagem in the Fight phase, when an **ADEPTUS ASTARTES CHARACTER** model from your army that has not already been selected to fight this phase is destroyed. Do not remove that model from play – it can fight after the attacking model's unit has finished making attacks. After resolving the destroyed model's attacks, it is then removed.

THE STRENGTH OF THE EMPEROR 1CP

Adeptus Astartes – Boarding Actions – Battle Tactic Stratagem

Blessed with incredible strength, Space Marines deliver blows that inflict terrifying damage.

Use this Stratagem in the Fight phase, when an **ADEPTUS ASTARTES** unit from your army is selected to fight. Until the end of the phase, each time a model in that unit makes a melee attack, add 1 to the Strength characteristic of that attack and an unmodified hit roll of 6 automatically wounds the target.

STEADY ADVANCE 1CP

Adeptus Astartes – Boarding Actions – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

A measured advance allows Space Marines to unleash a steady stream of accurate fire on the move.

Use this Stratagem when an **ADEPTUS ASTARTES** unit from your army completes the Set Overwatch action. While that unit Sets Overwatch, it also Holds Steady.

The T'au Fire Warrior burst in a shower of fragmented armour, shattered bone and blood. Sergeant Shaevac of the Raven Guard unleashed a second salvo from his storm bolter, the mass-reactive rounds obliterating the xenos they struck. The once clean walls of the T'au cruiser dripped with gore.

'Xenos slain. Squad Shaevac advancing to the enginarium as ordered,' he voxed to Lieutenant Kaspor. He was striding on before he had finished speaking, the boots of his heavy Terminator suit clanking on the deck. There was a series of sickening cracks and squelches as Shaevac and his warriors crushed the T'au corpses underfoot.

'*Noted. Enemy resistance increasing en route to the bridge. T'au forces assisted by mercenaries* – Squats,' voxed back Kaspor. '*You may be needed in the final assault against the xenos command centre.*'

'Understood, sir. Shaevac out.'

All was eerily quiet for a time, save the gentle thrum of the T'au ship's engines and the soft clicking of technical equipment. Then Shaevac's in-helm auspex blinked, showing a number of unknown figures rapidly approaching.

'Ready for xenos attack,' Shaevac ordered, activating the energy field of his power sword. He did not slow down. Whatever was coming towards them, he would run straight through. He wanted the alien enginarium secure before any order came to join the assault on the bridge.

Then they came. Kroot, bounding around a corner in the wide corridor ahead. Shaevac increased his pace, sensing his warriors behind him doing the same. Brother Streng came up on his left flank, Brother Ordane on his right. Shaevac heard the cracks of Kroot rifle fire, and the high-pitched ping of solid shots bouncing off Terminator armour. He raised his storm bolter and fired.

Xenos bodies broke apart in the explosions Shaevac's fire unleashed. The light armour and thin, avian forms of the xenos could not remotely handle the sheer power of storm bolter fire. More of the once pristine T'au ship was painted red.

The Kroot came on, and Shaevac could not doubt their courage. They wielded their rifles like bladed staffs, whirring them around their heads with great skill. Shaevac was struck multiple times by one, taking fierce strikes to his helmet and lower legs. They barely even scratched his armour. The hits only bought the alien time, but its fate was inevitable – Shaevac punched his power sword through its torso and ripped it free, severing the alien in two. Around him, Shaevac saw more Kroot torn apart or crushed by the power fists of his warriors. He hacked down several more of the xenos in quick succession, before seeing a handful more in the corridor ahead. They carried much heavier weapons, with tips that resembled huge flowers in bloom. Fierce energy radiated from them, a bright light growing stronger. The Kroot were readying them to fire. Shaevac charged at them, but knew he was too late.

BLACK TEMPLARS

KEEPER OF OATHS

The fury of a Black Templar cannot be stayed until the foe lies ruined at his feet.

BLACK TEMPLARS model only. The bearer is eligible to perform a Heroic Intervention if it is within 6" of a visible enemy unit. Each time the bearer makes a Heroic Intervention move, so long as it ends that move closer to the closest enemy model, it can move up to 6".

NO MERCY, NO ESCAPE — 1CP

Adeptus Astartes – Black Templars – Boarding Actions – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

With glowing blades and revving chainswords, the Black Templars bar their foes' retreat.

Use this Stratagem in your opponent's Movement phase, when an enemy **INFANTRY** or **BEAST** unit that is within Engagement Range of any **BLACK TEMPLARS** units from your army is selected to Fall Back. Roll one D6: on a 4+, that enemy unit cannot Fall Back this phase and must Remain Stationary instead.

BLOOD ANGELS

AGILITY OF THE ANGEL

Such is this Blood Angel's speed in combat, it is as if the Primarch himself fights alongside him.

BLOOD ANGELS model only. Each time a melee attack is made against the bearer, subtract 1 from that attack's hit roll and that hit roll cannot be re-rolled.

RED RAMPAGE — 1CP

Adeptus Astartes – Blood Angels – Boarding Actions – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

In times of great desperation, fury and ferocity can be a warrior's strongest allies.

Use this Stratagem in the Fight phase, when a **BLOOD ANGELS** unit from your army is selected to fight. Until the end of the phase, each time a model in that unit makes a melee attack, on an unmodified hit roll of 6, that attack scores one additional hit.

CRIMSON FISTS

STEADFAST TO THE END

The stubbornness of the Crimson Fists is renowned throughout the Imperium.

CRIMSON FISTS model only. The bearer cannot lose more than 3 wounds in the same phase. Any wounds that would be lost after that point are not lost.

NO MATTER THE ODDS — 1CP

Adeptus Astartes – Crimson Fists – Boarding Actions – Battle Tactic Stratagem

Even when faced with seemingly insurmountable odds, the Crimson Fists emerge bloodied but victorious with bolters roaring.

Use this Stratagem in your Shooting phase, when a **CRIMSON FISTS** unit from your army is selected to shoot. Until the end of the phase, each time a model in that unit makes an attack with a bolt weapon (see *Codex: Space Marines*), on an unmodified hit roll of 5+, that attack scores one additional hit.

DARK ANGELS

MASTERFUL STRATEGIST

Only the most able commanders can adapt the guidance of the Codex Astartes and secure victory.

DARK ANGELS model only. In your Command phase, you can select one friendly **DARK ANGELS** unit within 9" of the bearer, then select one Combat Doctrine. Until the start of your next Command phase, that Combat Doctrine is considered to be active for that unit instead of the Combat Doctrine that is active for the rest of your army.

INTRACTABLE — 1CP

Adeptus Astartes – Dark Angels – Boarding Actions – Battle Tactic Stratagem

Although stubborn warriors, even the resolute Dark Angels know that a fighting retreat can be the wisest course.

Use this Stratagem in your Movement phase, when a **DARK ANGELS** unit from your army is selected to Fall Back.

- If that unit has the Inner Circle ability (see *Codex: Dark Angels*), do not roll 2D6 to see if it can Fall Back – it can automatically do so.
- That unit is eligible to shoot this turn.

DEATHWATCH

LIGHT OF ANGELS

Housed within a reliquary, this device guides the Deathwatch to their adversaries' location, calling out to the bearer's augur arrays with the voices of a hundred electric cherubim.

DEATHWATCH model only. Once per battle, at the start of your Movement phase, the bearer can use this Enhancement. If it does so, the bearer, or one friendly **DEATHWATCH** unit within 6" of the bearer, is placed into Reserves. In the Reinforcements step of your next turn, the unit placed into Reserves using this Enhancement arrives from Reserves in addition to any other units, and you can set that unit up anywhere on the battlefield that is more than 9" away from any enemy models.

BROTHERHOOD OF VETERANS — 1CP

Adeptus Astartes – Deathwatch – Boarding Actions – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

The battle-brothers of the Deathwatch hail from many different Space Marine brotherhoods, resulting in the combination of many doctrines and tactics to use against the xenos threat.

Use this Stratagem in your Command phase. Select one **DEATHWATCH** unit from your army, then select one Chapter Tactic or Successor Tactic (see *Codex: Space Marines*). Until the end of the turn, models in that unit have that Chapter Tactic or Successor Tactic instead of the Xenos Hunters Chapter Tactic.

FLESH TEARERS

SAVAGE SLAUGHTERER

This Flesh Tearer is but a single, blood-fuelled moment away from succumbing to the Black Rage. In battle he is lost to the pursuit of slaughter, hacking apart all before him with unrelenting savagery.

FLESH TEARERS model only. Each time the bearer makes a melee attack, on an unmodified hit roll of 6, that attack scores 2 additional hits.

SAVAGE DESTRUCTION — 1CP

Adeptus Astartes – Flesh Tearers – Boarding Actions – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

Enemy fighters scramble to escape the Flesh Tearers' ferocity.

Use this Stratagem in the Morale phase, when a Morale test is failed for an enemy unit that is within Engagement Range of any **FLESH TEARERS** units from your army. Until the end of the turn, subtract 2 from Combat Attrition tests taken for that enemy unit.

IMPERIAL FISTS

CLOSE-RANGE PUNISHMENT

In the close confines of boarding actions, the Imperial Fists know that failing to destroy targets with a single overwhelming salvo is to invite death.

IMPERIAL FISTS model only. In your Command phase, select one friendly **IMPERIAL FISTS** unit within 9" of the bearer. Until the end of the turn, each time a model in that unit makes a ranged attack, add 1 to the Strength characteristic of that attack.

SIEGE MASTERS — 1CP

Adeptus Astartes – Imperial Fists – Boarding Actions – Battle Tactic Stratagem

The Imperial Fists drill tirelessly with their armaments, perfecting the art of purging their foes from defensive positions with hails of pinpoint fire.

Use this Stratagem in your Shooting phase, when an **IMPERIAL FISTS** unit from your army is selected to shoot. Until the end of the phase, each time a model in that unit makes a ranged attack, the target does not receive the benefits of cover against that attack.

IRON HANDS

STRENGTH OF MIND AND BODY

While the many bionics sported by Iron Hands warriors render them difficult indeed to slay, their Chapter expects them to be no weaker of mind.

IRON HANDS model only. Each time the bearer would lose a wound, roll one D6: on a 5+, that wound is not lost.

NO CLEMENCY — 1CP/2CP

Adeptus Astartes – Iron Hands – Boarding Actions – Battle Tactic Stratagem

Logic dictates that, once a foe has been marked for destruction, the Iron Hands must not relent until the target is annihilated.

Use this Stratagem in your Shooting phase or the Fight phase, when an **IRON HANDS** unit from your army is selected to shoot or fight. Until the end of the phase, each time a model in that unit makes an attack that targets a unit below Half-strength, add 1 to that attack's wound roll. If that **IRON HANDS** unit has the **TERMINATOR** keyword, this Stratagem costs 2CP; otherwise, it costs 1CP.

SALAMANDERS

MASTER AT THE ANVIL

The weapons forged by the Salamanders are not only stunning pieces of art; they are also decidedly more effective in battle.

SALAMANDERS model only. Each time the bearer makes an attack, on a successful unmodified hit roll of 5+, that attack scores 1 additional hit.

FLAMECRAFT — 1CP

Adeptus Astartes – Salamanders – Boarding Actions – Battle Tactic Stratagem

No warriors can coax the searing spirits of flamers to brighter or more destructive life than those from volcanic Nocturne.

Use this Stratagem in your Shooting phase, when a **SALAMANDERS** unit from your army is selected to shoot. Until the end of the phase, each time a model in that unit makes an attack with a flame or melta weapon (see *Codex: Space Marines*), add 1 to that attack's wound roll.

RAVEN GUARD

SWIFT HUNTER

To attack a warrior of the Raven Guard is to attempt to strike mist, smoke and shadow.

RAVEN GUARD model only. Each time an attack is made against the bearer, subtract 1 from that attack's hit roll and the hit roll cannot be re-rolled.

INFILTRATING ADVANCE — 1CP

Adeptus Astartes – Raven Guard – Boarding Actions – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

At the opportune moment, Raven Guard infiltration units slip away from battle, only to relocate and strike the foe again from a different angle.

Use this Stratagem in your Movement phase, when a **RAVEN GUARD** unit from your army is set up within an Entry Zone. That unit can make a Normal Move of up to 6".

SPACE WOLVES

BLOOD OF THE WOLFKIN

This Space Wolf has a primal potency, unleashing his bestial predatory instinct and sending his savagery into overdrive until not a single enemy remains.

SPACE WOLVES model only.

- Each time the bearer makes a charge move, until the end of the turn, add 1 to its Attacks characteristic.
- If the bearer makes a melee attack that destroys an enemy model, then until the end of the battle, the bearer gains the following ability:
  Saga of the Wolfkin (Aura): While a friendly **SPACE WOLVES CORE** unit is within 6" of this model, each time that unit makes a charge move, until the end of the turn, add 1 to the Attacks characteristic of models in that unit.

COUNTER CHARGE 1CP

Adeptus Astartes – Space Wolves – Boarding Actions – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

The inter-pack dynamism of the Space Wolves ensures a fluid coordination of support that sees the Chapter's battle-brothers launch themselves at the enemy's throats from unexpected quarters.

Use this Stratagem in your opponent's Charge phase. Select one **SPACE WOLVES** unit from your army. Until the end of the phase, that unit is eligible to perform a Heroic Intervention if it is within 6" horizontally of an enemy unit, and when performing a Heroic Intervention with that unit, you can move each model in that unit up to 6". All other rules for Heroic Interventions still apply.

'Tonight, my brothers, we sail upon the Sea of Stars! War awaits us, and glory! We shall redden our blades with the blood of the Ork and our wolves shall feast on their flesh. From the skies we shall descend to slay them; under the tracks of our transports shall we grind them to nothing. The Allfather is watching. He will see us overcome the greenskins and liberate his world from their taint. Until then I bid you, drink all the mjod you can; this may be your last chance!'

- Wulfgar Blackhelm of the Seawolves Great Company

ULTRAMARINES

WISDOM OF THE CODEX

Ultramarines are peerless masters of tactics and strategy, epitomising the teachings of the Codex Astartes.

ULTRAMARINES model only. While the bearer is on the battlefield, each time you spend a Command point to use a Stratagem, you can roll one D6: on a 5+, that Command point is refunded.

ADAPTIVE STRATEGY 1CP

Adeptus Astartes – Ultramarines – Boarding Actions – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

The tenets of the Codex Astartes allow for unorthodox use of combat tactics and the employment of divergent strategic doctrines if doing so will lead to victory.

Use this Stratagem in your Command phase. Select one **ULTRAMARINES** unit from your army that is on the battlefield. Until the start of your next Command phase, each time a model in that unit makes an attack, the Devastator Doctrine, Tactical Doctrine and Assault Doctrine are all considered to be active for that attack.

WHITE SCARS

HONOUR OF THE CHASE

The White Scars are hunters supreme, striking their foes with the fury of a lightning storm.

WHITE SCARS model only. You can re-roll Advance and charge rolls made for the bearer.

SPEED OF THE HURRICANE 1CP

Adeptus Astartes – White Scars – Boarding Actions – Battle Tactic Stratagem

It is said on Chogoris that the sons of the Khan ride the storm-winds themselves, racing swift and wrathful into war.

Use this Stratagem in your Movement phase, when a **WHITE SCARS** unit from your army is selected to Advance. Do not make an Advance roll for that unit. Instead, until the end of the phase, add 8" to the Move characteristic of models in that unit.

GREY KNIGHTS

The Grey Knights are the most elite Adeptus Astartes. Forged in secret ten thousand years ago, they are Humanity's greatest weapon against its direst threat: the daemonic horrors spawned from the stuff of Chaos.

MUSTERING A BOARDING PATROL

When mustering a Boarding Patrol, if your Faction is **GREY KNIGHTS**, then the following rules apply when adding units to your Boarding Patrol Detachment, and they take priority over the normal rules for mustering a Boarding Patrol.

- All **<BROTHERHOOD>** units in your Boarding Patrol must be from the same Brotherhood.
- You can include one Fast Attack unit, but only if it is an **INTERCEPTOR SQUAD** unit.
- You can only add one **SERVITORS** unit if your Boarding Patrol Detachment includes a **BROTHERHOOD TECHMARINE** model.
- You cannot upgrade any models in your army to have any Wisdom of the Prognosticars upgrades.

RULES ADAPTATIONS

If your Faction is **GREY KNIGHTS**, then the following rules adaptations apply to Grey Knights rules found in *Codex: Grey Knights*.

- Models in **INTERCEPTOR SQUAD** units have a Move characteristic of 6" while they are on the battlefield.
- The Personal Teleporters ability of **INTERCEPTOR SQUAD** units is changed to: 'Once per battle, models in this unit can use their teleporters to make a Normal Move. If they do so, until that move is finished, models in this unit can move horizontally through models and terrain features as if they were not there (they cannot finish this move on top of another model or its base, or within Engagement Range of any enemy models).
- When an enemy model makes a ranged attack that targets a **GREY KNIGHTS** unit from your army while the Tide of Shadows is dominant for your army, if the attacking model is more than 6" away from that target unit, that target unit is treated as having the benefits of cover against that attack.
- You cannot attempt to manifest *Fatal Precognition*, *Fires of Covenant* or any of the Witchfire psychic powers from the Sanctic discipline more than once each per battle round.
- The *Gate of Infinity* psychic power has a warp charge value of 11.
- The *Vortex of Doom* psychic power has a warp charge value of 10.

ENHANCEMENTS

If your **WARLORD** has the **GREY KNIGHTS** keyword, then when mustering your Boarding Patrol, they can be given one of the following Enhancements instead of one from *Arks of Omen: Abaddon*.

MASTER OF THE TIDES

Some Grey Knights become so attuned to the tides of the warp they can almost bend them entirely to their will.

The bearer knows the *Warp Shaping* psychic power from the Dominus discipline (see *Codex: Grey Knights*) in addition to any other psychic powers it knows, and can attempt to manifest that psychic power in your Psychic phase in addition to the normal number of powers it can manifest.

SIGIL OF URGENCY

This minute silver icon contains a personal teleport matrix and a vigilant machine spirit. Its precogitative psyroutines carefully watch for attacks from a distance, and at the sign of danger it transports its bearer away in a crack of energy.

Once per battle, in your opponent's Shooting phase, when the bearer is selected as the target of a ranged attack it can activate this Relic. If it does so, it can make a Normal Move of up to 6". Your opponent can then select new eligible targets for any attacks that had targeted the bearer.

DAEMON SLAYER

This Grey Knight is a master of the rituals of banishing and unbinding, able to sever his daemonic foes' connection to the warp and crush their mortal forms.

Add 1 to the bearer's Attacks characteristic. Each time the bearer makes an attack against a **DAEMON** unit, no saving throws of any kind can be made against that attack.

BOARDING ACTION STRATAGEMS

If your Faction is **GREY KNIGHTS**, then when playing a Boarding Action game you will have access to the following Stratagems, and can spend CP to use them.

PSYCHIC CHANNELLING — 1CP

Grey Knights – Boarding Actions – Battle Tactic Stratagem

Even in the midst of ferocious combat, a Grey Knight can unfetter the full potential of their finely crafted psychic talents.

Use this Stratagem in your Psychic phase, when a **GREY KNIGHTS PSYKER** unit from your army is selected to manifest a psychic power. Until the end of the phase, each time a Psychic test is taken for that unit, roll one additional D6 and discard one of the dice.

KNIGHTLY COMMUNION — 1CP

Grey Knights – Boarding Actions – Battle Tactic Stratagem

By establishing a psychic connection with their warriors, Grey Knights commanders are able to impart their expertise and experience even at a distance.

Use this Stratagem in your Command phase. Select one **GREY KNIGHTS CHARACTER** model from your army that is on the battlefield, then select one friendly **GREY KNIGHTS CORE** unit. Until the start of your next Command phase, that **CORE** unit counts as being within range of any aura abilities that **CHARACTER** model has.

STRIKE OF SACRED WRATH — 2CP

Grey Knights – Boarding Actions – Epic Deed Stratagem

The Grey Knight channels all his righteous wrath into his Nemesis force weapon, infusing it with even greater fury and power.

Use this Stratagem in the Fight phase, when a melee attack made by a **GREY KNIGHTS CHARACTER** model from your army is allocated to an enemy model. No saving throws of any kind can be made against that attack.

BATTLE PRESAGE — 1CP

Grey Knights – Boarding Actions – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

With their superlative martial skills honed to perfection, Grey Knights can turn the enemy's blows against them.

Use this Stratagem in the Fight phase, when a **GREY KNIGHTS** unit from your army that is Set to Defend is selected as the target of an attack. Until the end of the phase, each time an attack is made against that unit, subtract 1 from that attack's hit roll.

TRUESILVER ARMOUR — 1CP/2CP

Grey Knights – Boarding Actions – Wargear Stratagem

Grey Knights battle plate incorporates litanies of purity, strands of sanctified silver and other sacred wards.

Use this Stratagem in any phase, when a **GREY KNIGHTS CORE** unit from your army is selected as the target of an attack. Until the end of the phase, each time an attack is made against that unit, an unmodified wound roll of 1-3 for that attack fails, irrespective of any abilities that the weapon or the model making the attack may have. If that unit has the **TERMINATOR** keyword, this Stratagem costs 2CP; otherwise, it costs 1CP.

PSYBOLT AMMUNITION — 1CP

Grey Knights – Boarding Actions – Wargear Stratagem

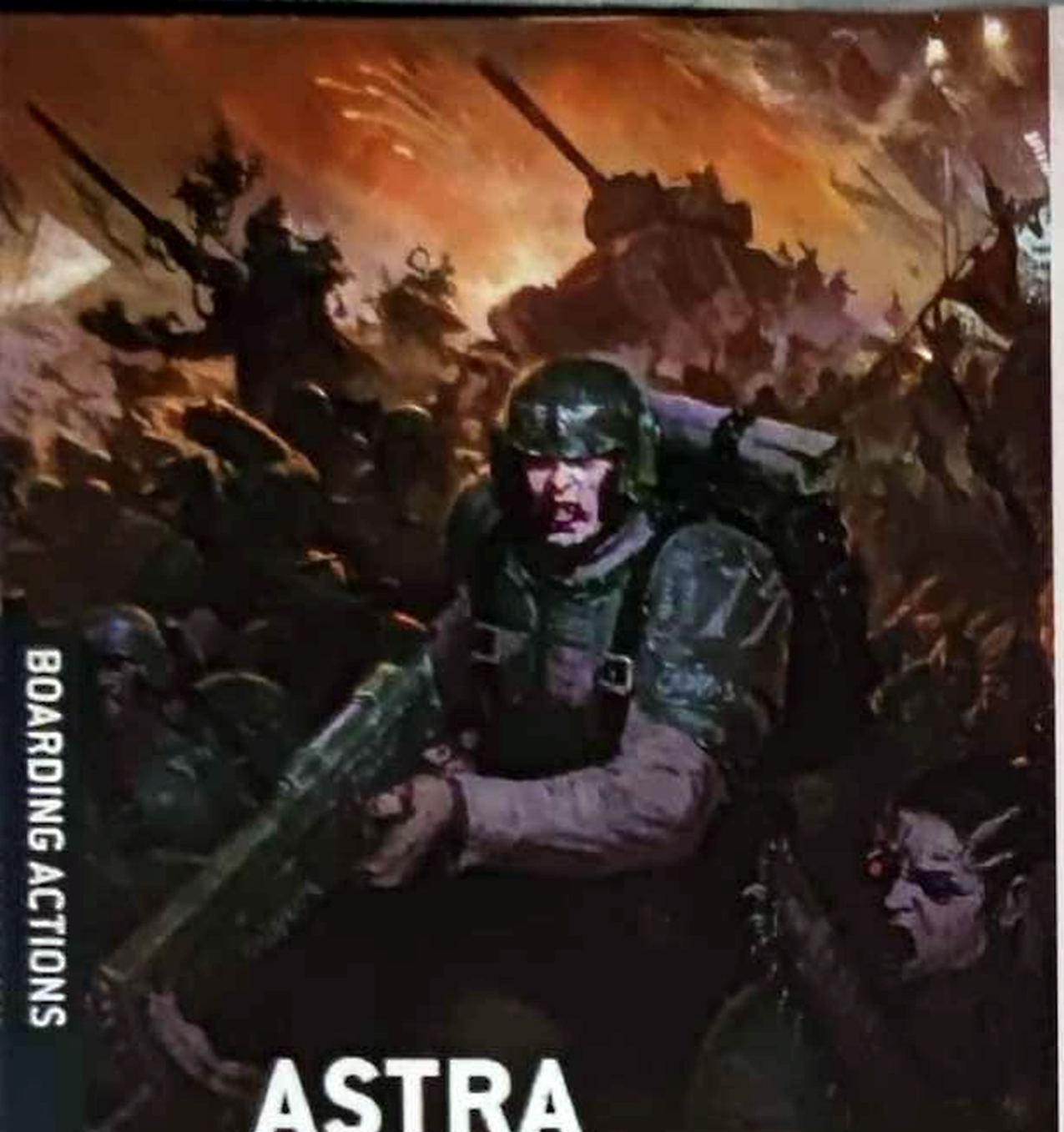
By entreating the machine spirit of his weapon with psychic incantations, a battle-brother can infuse its already deadly payload with explosive mental energy.

Use this Stratagem in your Shooting phase, when a **GREY KNIGHTS** unit from your army is selected to shoot. Until the end of the phase, each time a model in that unit makes a ranged attack with a bolt weapon (see *Codex: Grey Knights*):

- On an unmodified hit roll of 6, that attack automatically wounds the target.
- Improve the Armour Penetration characteristic of that attack by 1.

'Three-dozen times have I fought the fell get of the empyrean aboard ship. I have seen them crawl and slither out of walls of solid metal, blades and all. I have seen their infernal flames blaze even as the vessel's anti-inferno protocols have cascaded torrents of flame-quenching substances from above. They have seized the legs of mortal crew and dragged them through the deck floor to a horrific end. They can materialise at any time, in any place. Yet for all this power, I have smote them by the hundred. I am blessed with the gifts of the Emperor, and no falseness crafted by the machinations of the warp will ever overpower me.'

– Brother Gabryon Thrayn of the Grey Knights



ASTRA MILITARUM

Known as the Hammer of the Emperor, the Astra Militarum is a monolithic military force comprising soldiers and armoured vehicles beyond count, spread across war zones throughout the galaxy.

MUSTERING A BOARDING PATROL

When mustering a Boarding Patrol, if your Faction is **ASTRA MILITARUM**, then the following rules apply when adding units to your Boarding Patrol Detachment, and they take priority over the normal rules for mustering a Boarding Patrol.

- You can include up to three **CHARACTER** models, but only one of these can have a Wounds characteristic of 5 or more.
- **ATTACHÉ** models can be added to **COMMAND SQUAD** units to increase their unit size above 5, but no more than one **ATTACHÉ** model can be added to each **COMMAND SQUAD**. When forming Boarding Squads, do not split such a unit into separate units.
- You can only add one **MUNITORUM SERVITORS** unit if your Boarding Patrol Detachment includes an **ENGINSEER** model.
- When forming Boarding Squads, do not split **INFANTRY SQUAD** units into separate units.

RULES ADAPTATIONS

If your Faction is **ASTRA MILITARUM**, then the following rules adaptations apply to Astra Militarum rules found in *Codex: Astra Militarum*.

- The Recon Operators Regimental Doctrine is changed to: 'At the start of the first battle round, one unit with this Regimental Doctrine that has every model within one of your Entry Zones can make a Normal Move of up to 6".'
- The *Psychic Maelstrom* psychic power has a warp charge value of 8.
- Models with the Aerial Drop ability lose that ability for the battle.

ENHANCEMENTS

If your **WARLORD** has the **ASTRA MILITARUM** keyword, then when mustering your Boarding Patrol, they can be given one of the following Enhancements instead of one from *Arks of Omen: Abaddon*.

SUPERIOR TACTICAL TRAINING

Having commanded troops on countless battlefields, this veteran officer has borne witness to the manifold caprices of war. They have perfected just as many strategic responses, and bark out a constant stream of rapidly evolving orders.

When you select this Enhancement, select one type of Orders (Regimental or Prefectus) that the bearer does not know. The bearer knows those Orders in addition to any others it knows.

DEATH MASK OF OLLANIUS

Ollanius the Pious is the epitome of Imperial sainthood, believed martyred at the hands of Horus himself. In the millennia since his passing, Ollanius' death mask has been revered as a holy relic.

Models in the bearer's unit have a 4+ invulnerable save.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

This soldier is known for their strategic excellence, as are those they command. Honed over many years, their curt, well established battle cant is wielded with consummate efficiency, reinforced by the inspirational example they themselves set.

The bearer can issue Orders (see *Codex: Astra Militarum*) to its own unit, even though you cannot normally select **OFFICER** units when issuing Orders.

UNCOMPROMISING PROSECUTION

This soldier concentrates their troops' firepower on a target's most vulnerable points, maximising the damage they inflict with every ruthless volley.

MILITARUM TEMPESTUS model only. In your Command phase, select one friendly **MILITARUM TEMPESTUS** unit within 9" of the bearer. Each time a model in that unit makes a ranged attack that targets a unit within half range, improve the Armour Penetration characteristic of that attack by 1.

BOARDING ACTION STRATAGEMS

If your Faction is **ASTRA MILITARUM**, then when playing a Boarding Action game you will have access to the following Stratagems, and can spend CP to use them.

VOLLEY FIRE 1CP

Astra Militarum – Boarding Actions – Battle Tactic Stratagem

The Imperial Guard are trained to hold their fire until the perfect moment, lest they waste the God-Emperor's ammunition. When unleashed, the devastatingly accurate volley cuts the foe to pieces.

Use this Stratagem at the end of your Shooting phase. Select one **ASTRA MILITARUM INFANTRY SQUAD** unit from your army that Remained Stationary this turn; that unit can shoot again.

DEFENSIVE FIRE 1CP

Astra Militarum – Boarding Actions – Battle Tactic Stratagem

Astra Militarum troops are often trained in holding ground and unleashing decisive defensive volleys.

Use this Stratagem when an **ASTRA MILITARUM** unit from your army completes the Set Overwatch action. Until the end of your opponent's next turn, while that unit Sets Overwatch, it also Holds Steady.

HEADS DOWN! 1CP

Astra Militarum – Boarding Actions – Battle Tactic Stratagem

Ordered to hit the deck and aim from a prone position, Astra Militarum soldiers allow other members of their platoon to shoot over their heads.

Use this Stratagem in your Shooting phase. Select one **ASTRA MILITARUM CORE** unit from your army. Until the end of the phase, models in that unit are ignored for the purposes of determining visibility for models in other friendly units.

UNWAVERING DETERMINATION 1CP

Astra Militarum – Boarding Actions – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

No matter how perilous the situation, Tempestus Scions never waver, continuing to fight on regardless.

Use this Stratagem in your Movement phase, when a **MILITARUM TEMPESTUS** unit from your army is selected to Fall Back. Until the end of the turn, that unit is eligible to shoot and is eligible to declare a charge even though it Fell Back this turn.

CAREFUL PLANNING 1CP

Astra Militarum – Boarding Actions – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

The officers of this regiment carefully plan their tactics ahead of battle and drill their troops in what to expect.

Use this Stratagem in your Command phase, when an **OFFICER** model from your army is selected to issue an Order. When issuing that Order, it can be issued to any friendly **PLATOON** unit on the battlefield.

SUPERCHARGED LAS 1CP

Astra Militarum – Boarding Actions – Wargear Stratagem

With advanced cell shielding – and said to harbour bellicose spirits – hot-shot lasguns can be temporarily overcharged to deadly effect.

Use this Stratagem in your Shooting phase, when a **KASRKIN** or **MILITARUM TEMPESTUS** unit from your army is selected to shoot. Until the end of the phase, each time a model in that unit makes an attack with a hot-shot weapon (see *Codex: Astra Militarum*), an unmodified wound roll of 6 inflicts 1 mortal wound on the target in addition to any normal damage (a maximum of 3 mortal wounds can be inflicted each time this Stratagem is used).

'Scores generations of my family have served in the Astra Militarum, willing to sacrifice life and limb for Emperor and Imperium. Indeed, many have been honoured to pay that price, and each has paid it gladly. There is no greater honour than to lead the Emperor's soldiers in his holy wars to shatter xenos and heretic and bring all the galaxy under his control. We will succeed, even if it takes a thousand times a hundred generations, and the glorious empire we will create will always remember that it was built upon the bodies of heroes.'

– Major Horundus of the 954th Egruskan Sidewinders

ORKS

The Orks are the most savage and warlike species in the galaxy, and can be found infesting its every corner. Far removed from the enigmatic and scheming nature of many other races, greenskins are simple beings who live for battle.

MUSTERING A BOARDING PATROL

When mustering a Boarding Patrol, if your Faction is **ORKS**, then the following rules apply when adding units to your Boarding Patrol Detachment, and they take priority over the normal rules for mustering a Boarding Patrol.

- All **<CLAN>** units in your Boarding Patrol must be from the same Clan.
- You can include up to two **CHARACTER** models, but only if one of them is a **RUNTHERD** model. You cannot include more than one **RUNTHERD CHARACTER** model.
- You can only include one **GRETCHIN** unit. When forming Boarding Squads, do not split a **GRETCHIN** unit into separate units.
- You can include one Heavy Support unit, but only if it is a **FLASH GITZ** unit.
- You can include up to two units of **MEGANOBZ** in your army.
- You can only upgrade one model in your army to have a Kustom Job.

RULES ADAPTATIONS

If your Faction is **ORKS**, then the following rules adaptations apply to Orks rules found in *Codex: Orks*.

- The Throat Slittas ability that **KOMMANDOS** units have only applies while the attacking unit is within 1" of an open Hatchway or if it has used a distraction grot.
- Each time an enemy model makes a ranged attack that targets a unit with the Taktiks kultur, if the attacking model is more than 6" away from that target unit, that target unit is treated as having the benefits of cover against that attack.
- If any units from your army have the Lucky Blue Gitz kultur, instead of all **INFANTRY** units with that kultur gaining the Objective Secured ability, each **INFANTRY** model in such a unit counts as one additional model when determining control of an objective marker.
- Each time an attack made with a tankhammer misses the target, the bearer is destroyed and its unit suffers D3 mortal wounds.
- When you deploy a **GRETCHIN** unit in an Entry Zone, you can deploy a friendly **RUNTHERD** unit in that Entry Zone as well.
- The *Da Jump* psychic power has a warp charge value of 11.

ENHANCEMENTS

If your **WARLORD** has the **ORKS** keyword, then when mustering your Boarding Patrol, they can be given one of the following Enhancements instead of one from *Arks of Omen: Abaddon*.

MIGHT IS RIGHT

A solid slab of muscle and aggression, this Ork's strength is unsurpassed.

Add 1 to the bearer's Strength and Attacks characteristics.

BIG BOSS

The greatest Warbosses keep a few lieutenants around to reinforce their rule. This has the dual effect of ensuring commands are disseminated effectively, and that the Warboss is kept fighting fit.

This Enhancement cannot be given to a **WARBOSS** model. Once per battle, in your Command phase, you can call a Waaagh! if the bearer is on the battlefield, even though it is not a **WARBOSS** model. If you do so, Stage 1 of that Waaagh! takes effect normally, but Stage 2 does not take effect.

SUPA-CYBORK BODY

This endoskeleton is the envy of every Warboss around. Constructed from bits of scrap taken from dozens of similar pieces, it is a contraption that offers the wearer unparalleled resilience.

Add 1 to the bearer's Wounds characteristic and change its Toughness characteristic to 6.

BOARDING ACTION STRATAGEMS

If your Faction is **ORKS**, then when playing a Boarding Action game you will have access to the following Stratagems, and can spend CP to use them.

STICK IT TO 'EM, LADZ! 1CP

Orks – Boarding Actions – Battle Tactic Stratagem

When Orks gather in large numbers, their sheer impetus carries them into the foe, destroying everything in their path.

Use this Stratagem in the Fight phase, when an **ORKS** unit from your army is selected to fight. Until the end of the phase, each time a model in that unit makes a pile-in or consolidation move, it can move up to an additional 3". This is not cumulative with any other rule that increases the distance models can pile in or consolidate.

DAKKA STORM 1CP

Orks – Boarding Actions – Battle Tactic Stratagem

Though it is normally known for its inaccuracy, the typical deluge of Ork shooting is utterly devastating in the close confines of a ship.

Use this Stratagem in your Shooting phase, when an **ORKS** unit from your army is selected to shoot. Until the end of the phase, each time a model in that unit makes an attack with a Dakka weapon (see *Codex: Orks*), if a hit is scored, that attack scores 1 additional hit.

LEATHERHIDE 1CP

Orks – Boarding Actions – Battle Tactic Stratagem

Orks live tough lives, their hardy greenskin constitutions pushed to extremes by the danger they surround themselves with. As a result, even the lowliest Ork can take a tremendous amount of punishment before being slain.

Use this Stratagem in any phase, when an **ORKS** unit from your army (excluding **GRETCHIN** units) is selected as the target of an attack. Until the end of the phase, each time an attack is made against that unit, an unmodified wound roll of 1-3 for that attack fails, irrespective of any abilities that the weapon or the model making the attack may have.

TOO 'ARD TO DIE 1CP

Orks – Boarding Actions – Epic Deed Stratagem

It can take a long time for an Ork to grasp the fact that it has been mortally wounded, especially if it's enjoying a good fight.

Use this Stratagem in the Fight phase, when an **ORKS** unit from your army that has not already been selected to fight this phase is selected as the target of an attack. Until the end of the phase, each time a model in that unit is destroyed, do not remove it from play. The destroyed model can fight after the attacking model's unit has finished making attacks, and is then removed from play.

TELLYPORTA 1CP

Orks – Boarding Actions – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

Nothing shocks the enemy like an angry mob of Orks suddenly appearing in a blast of green lightning!

Use this Stratagem during deployment. Select one **ORKS** unit from your army. You can set up this unit on a tellyporta pad instead of setting it up on the battlefield. If you do so, then in the Reinforcements step of one of your Movement phases, you can set up this unit anywhere on the battlefield that is more than 9" away from any enemy models. You can only use this Stratagem once.

PILE THROUGH 1CP

Orks – Boarding Actions – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

Orks react to the sudden availability of a good scrap with immediate and enthusiastic aggression.

Use this Stratagem in your Movement phase when a Hatchway is opened, or in your opponent's Movement phase when a Hatchway is opened. Until the end of the turn, any **ORKS** units from your army that are now within Engagement Range of one or more enemy units as a result of that Hatchway being opened count as having made a charge move this turn.

'I like havin' a punch up on a spaceship. Da gitz can't shoot you before you can get up close to give 'em a kickin' cuz dere's all dem corners and warky bitz in da way. Ya never knowz wotz down da next ladder or through da next room, but dere's a good chance it's a fight waitin' to 'appen. But da best bit about it is dat satisfyin' crunch dem spaceship doors make wen ya smack 'em open right in yer enemy's face. Funnier dan watchin' Grots tryin' to catch a Gnasher Squig."

– Kaptin Uzgog, prolific Ork Freebooter and reputed wit

BOARDING ACTIONS

On the following pages you will find a plethora of new missions to use in your Boarding Action games. If you have the Boarding Actions rules from *Arks of Omen: Abaddon* and the Warhammer 40,000 Boarding Actions Terrain Set, then you can play any of the missions presented here. These missions are all asymmetric in nature, with one player taking on the role of the ship's defenders and the other a boarding party sent in to either seize control of or scuttle the enemy ship. Whether it's opening the vessel's airlocks to vent its crew into the void, raiding the cargo holds, or even using the ship's guns against ground forces on the planet below, you will find a raft of new scenarios to experience over the coming pages.

These missions can also be augmented with the Killzone: Gallowdark set. This provides several new pieces of scenery that can be incorporated into the game boards. Some offer new hiding spots and ambush possibilities, while others take the form of explosive canisters and highly charged electro-nodes that can significantly change the way players approach the missions. More details of these new additions can be found on pages 90-91.

It is important to note that all of the following missions are designed to be just as enjoyable whether or not you have these extra pieces of terrain, and each provides a fair and balanced game for both players, regardless of which role they take on. Indeed, it can be equally fun to replay a mission, with you and your opponent swapping round who is the Attacker and who is the Defender, using your newly acquired experience of the battle to see if you can achieve victory from the opposite perspective.

BOARDING ACTION GAMES

A Boarding Action game is waged by following the sequence below.

1. MUSTER BOARDING PATROL
The players must first muster their Boarding Patrol, as described in *Arks of Omen: Abaddon*. Each player must then provide a copy of their army roster for their opponent to read through. If, when players compare their points total, one player's is at least 30 points less than their opponent's, then the player with the smaller points total is the Underdog, and they may receive an Underdog bonus as detailed in the mission they are playing.

2. DETERMINE MISSION
The players determine which mission to play from the Boarding Action missions presented in this book. This will determine the deployment map that the players use, as well as the specific mission briefing. You can either simply agree which you will use with your opponent, or you can roll a D6 to randomly select a mission using the table below.

BOARDING ACTION MISSIONS

D6	MISSION
1	Void the Ship [pg 92]
2	Pull Their Teeth [pg 94]
3	Strongrooms [pg 96]
4	Jailbreak [pg 98]
5	Power the Generators [pg 100]
6	Corrupt the Machine Spirit [pg 102]

3. READ MISSION BRIEFING
Each mission has a mission briefing that will detail the aims of the battle. Each mission will also list one or more additional mission rules that will apply for the duration of the battle, and a series of objectives that award victory points to the players. The players should read and familiarise themselves with these before proceeding.

4. CREATE THE BATTLEFIELD AND PLACE OBJECTIVE MARKERS
The players now create the battlefield and set up terrain features. Missions are played on Boarding Action battlezones and the position of all terrain features – Walls and Hatchways – and objective markers that must be placed on the battlefield will be shown on the deployment map of the mission you are playing. Each mission will also specify which Hatchways start the mission open and which start the battle closed.

All of the missions in this book support the additional terrain included in the Killzone: Gallowdark set. If you have the terrain pieces from this set, then you can incorporate them into the battle, and the deployment map will show how to set these up. It is important to note that all of these missions have been designed to offer a fair, balanced and exciting experience, regardless of whether you incorporate these terrain features or not, but they can add an extra level of immersion. The rules for these terrain features can be found on pages 90-91.

5. FORM BOARDING SQUADS
Each unit in your Boarding Patrol that has a Unit Strength of 10 must now be split into multiple units, each containing 5 models. When splitting a unit, make a note of which models form each of the two new units. From this point onwards, these split units count as independent units for all rules purposes.

6. DETERMINE ATTACKER AND DEFENDER
The players roll off and the winner decides who will be the Attacker and who will be the Defender. The Attacker's and Defender's Entry Zones are labelled on the deployment map.

7. GENERATE STARTING COMMAND POINTS
Each player starts with 1 Command point.

8. DEPLOY ARMIES
The players alternate setting up their units one at a time, starting with the Defender. For each of a player's Entry Zones (as shown in the mission map), that player sets up one unit within that Entry Zone.

If a unit has a pre-battle rule that allows it to be set up anywhere on the battlefield, that unit can instead be set up wholly within 6" of that unit's Entry Zone. That Entry Zone is then considered to have had a unit set up within it, and cannot have another unit set up within it before the start of the battle. If one player finishes deploying all their units, their opponent then deploys the remainder of their units, until either both players have set up one unit per Entry Zone, or all units have been deployed.

If both players have units with abilities that allow them to be set up after both armies have deployed, the players must roll off after all other units have been set up and alternate setting up these units, starting with the winner.

9. DETERMINE RESERVES
Any units in a player's army that do not start the battle on the battlefield, will start the battle in Strategic Reserves. This does not cost any Command points to do so.

In the Reinforcements step of a player's Movement phase (starting from the first battle round onwards), that player can select one of their Strategic Reserves units for each of their Entry Zones that has no models within it and set those units up in those Entry Zones.

If one or more of the Reserves units that you have selected has a rule that would allow it to be set up in a location other than the battlefield (e.g. Teleport Strike) then in each of that player's turns (starting from the second battle round onwards), one of those units can be set up on the battlefield as described by their rule that turn, instead of being set up within an Entry Zone. Any Reserves unit that has not arrived on the battlefield by the end of the fourth battle round counts as having been destroyed (this does not apply to units that are placed into Reserves, including into Strategic Reserves, after the first battle round has started).

ENTRY ZONES
In Boarding Actions, each player will have one or more deployment zones called Entry Zones. Each time a unit from your Boarding Patrol is set up, it must be set up wholly within one of your Entry Zones. If a unit will not fit wholly within an Entry Zone, all of its models must be set up as close to the centre of that Entry Zone as possible.

You cannot set up a unit within an Entry Zone if any other unit is in that Entry Zone. However, when setting up a unit at the start of the battle, you can set up your Warlord alongside that unit as if it was a part of it, using the same Entry Zone. Rules that prevent a unit from being set up within a specific distance of another model or unit cannot prevent a unit from being set up within an Entry Zone.

10. DETERMINE FIRST TURN
The players roll off and the winner takes the first turn.

11. RESOLVE PRE-BATTLE ABILITIES
Each player can resolve a single pre-battle ability that units in their army may have, irrespective of how many units in their army may have them, starting with the player who will take the first turn.

12. BEGIN THE BATTLE
The first battle round begins. Players continue to resolve battle rounds until the battle ends.

13. ENDING THE BATTLE
The battle ends after five battle rounds have been completed. If one player has no models remaining in their army at the start of their turn, the other player may continue to play out their turns until the battle ends.

14. DETERMINE VICTOR
At the end of the battle, the player with the most victory points is the winner. If players are tied, the battle is a draw.

Each player can score a maximum of 90 victory points from mission objectives (any excess victory points awarded are discounted). If every model in a player's army was painted to a Battle Ready standard, that player is awarded a bonus 10 victory points. This gives players a maximum total score out of 100 victory points.

MISSION OBJECTIVES
During the battle, players can earn victory points by achieving mission objectives. There are two types of mission objectives: Progressive and End Game. Progressive mission objectives are scored during the battle (exactly when is detailed on the objective itself), and can be achieved, and hence award victory points, several times. End Game mission objectives are scored at the end of the battle.

COMPONENTS

LONG WALLS

LONG WALL

A1

LONG WALL WITH PILLARS

A2

LONG WALL WITH HATCHWAY

A3

LONG WALL WITH HATCHWAY AND PILLARS

A4

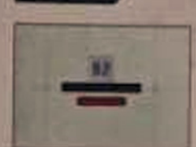
SHORT WALLS

SHORT WALL

B1

SHORT WALL WITH HATCHWAY

B2



SHORT WALL WITH HATCHWAY AND PILLARS

Type 1

Type 2

B3

PILLAR

Left Pillar

Right Pillar

WALL END

HATCHWAY POSITIONS

The locations of the Hatchways on the mission map are specified by the symbols to the right. This will help you identify the orientation of Walls with Hatchways.

KILLZONE: GALLOWDARK

OPTIONAL TERRAIN FEATURES

TERMINAL

C1

Wall: This terrain feature counts as a Wall.

PIPES

C2

Barrier: Models cannot move through this terrain feature.

Partial Cover: When a model makes a ranged attack, if it is not possible to trace straight lines from the attacker's base to every part of the target's base without any of those lines passing through this terrain feature, then the target receives the benefits of cover against that ranged attack.

COLLAPSED PIPE

C3

Impediment: If a unit makes a Normal Move, Advances or Falls Back, and any of its models wish to move through any part of this terrain feature, then until the end of that move, subtract 2" from the Move characteristic of those models (to a minimum of 0). If a unit declares a charge, and any of its models wish to move through any part of this terrain feature as part of its subsequent charge move, subtract 2 from that unit's charge roll.

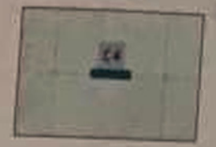
Partial Cover: When a model makes a ranged attack, if it is not possible to trace straight lines from the attacker's base to every part of the target's base without any of those lines passing through this terrain feature, then the target receives the benefits of cover against that ranged attack.

'See the men-beigh recoil before our wrath. See them flee from the fury of our warriors. How does the power of Khaine run through our veins this day! Victory is ours, brothers and sisters – never again shall this abomination they dare call a ship terrorise our Exodite kin. The Sapphire Worlds are made safe by our efforts this day. Let the corpses of the men-beigh forever be a warning to those who might endanger them again.'

- Autarch Theridaer the Undaunted of Craftworld Kinshara

ELECTRO-NODES

C4



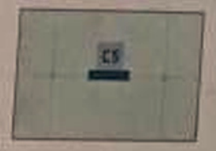
Barrier: Models cannot move through this terrain feature.

Partial Cover: When a model makes a ranged attack, if it is not possible to trace straight lines from the attacker's base to every part of the target's base without any of those lines passing through this terrain feature, then the target receives the benefits of cover against that ranged attack.

Electro-discharge: While a model is within 2" of this terrain feature, each time that model makes a ranged attack, subtract 1 from that attack's hit roll.

EXPLOSIVE CANISTERS

C5



Wall: This terrain feature counts as a Wall.

Destructible: This terrain feature counts as a model with the following profile:

Name	M	WS	BS	S	T	W	A	Ld	Sv
Explosive Canisters	-	-	-	3	3	3	-	10	7+

Either player can make ranged attacks against this terrain feature and, when it is destroyed, it Explodes (see below). It does not have an Engagement Range, charges cannot be declared against it, and melee attacks cannot be made against it. Both players can perform the following action:

Sabotage (Action): One or more units from your army can start to perform this action at the end of the Move Units step of your Movement phase, if they are within 1" of an Explosive Canisters terrain feature. This action is completed at the end of the turn. If completed, that terrain feature will Explode (see below) at the end of your next Movement phase.

Explodes: When this terrain feature Explodes, roll one D6 for each unit within 3" of it: on a 2-4, that unit suffers 1 mortal wound; on a 5+, that unit suffers 2 mortal wounds. Then remove this terrain feature from the battlefield. This terrain feature can only Explode once.

BOARDING ACTION MISSION

VOID THE SHIP

MISSION BRIEFING

Those storming an enemy ship often aim to take control of it by fighting past its defenders and capturing strategically vital locations. Yet some prefer a simpler, if more audacious, solution: exposing the decks to the void. Such actions cast hundreds of the vessel's defenders into the blackness of space, clearing a path to its enginarium, armouries and bridge.

MISSION RULES

Security Patrol: The Patrol Entry Zone can only be used by the Defender to set up a unit from their army before the battle, in the Deploy Armies step. Once the first battle round has started, that Entry Zone cannot be used when the Defender sets up any Strategic Reserve units from their army in an Entry Zone.

Set Defence: The Defender has the first turn.

Exposed to the Void: Models cannot enter the Inaccessible Area of the battlefield for any reason.

Airlocks: The Hatchways labelled 'Airlock' on the map opposite are considered to be Airlocks. Airlocks behave in the same way as normal Hatchways, with the following exceptions:

- An Airlock can only be opened by the Attacker.
- Once opened, an Airlock cannot be closed.

Underdog Bonus: If a player receives an Underdog bonus, that player starts the battle with 1 additional Command point.

OBJECTIVES

MAINTAIN SHIP INTEGRITY

End Game Objective

The defenders strive to maintain the vessel's integrity against their assailants' efforts to expose the ship to the void.

At the end of the battle:

- The Attacker scores 20 victory points for each of the Airlocks that have been opened.
- The Defender scores 20 victory points for each of the Airlocks that remain closed.

CUT OFF THE HEAD

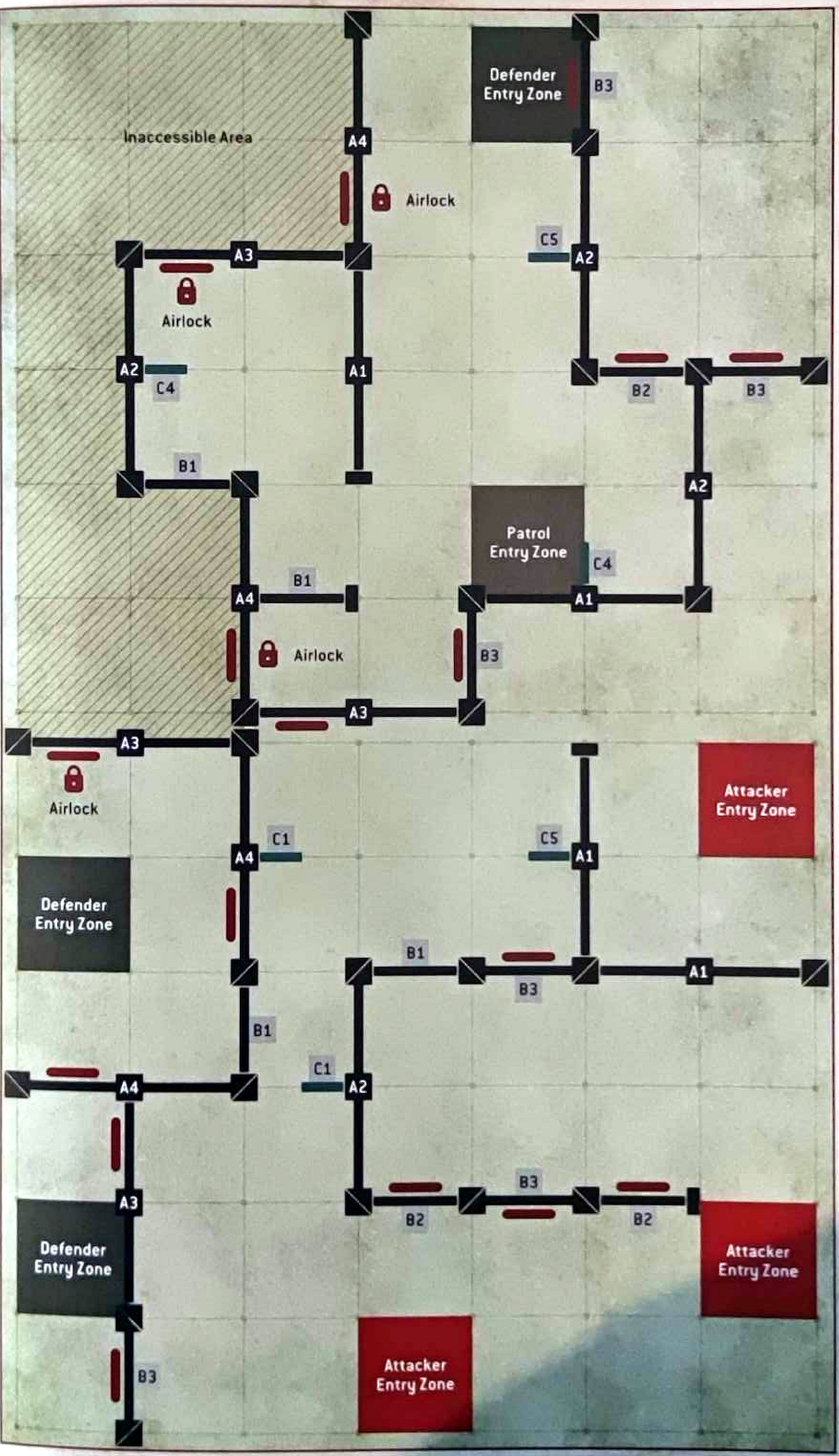
End Game Objective

It is common to find vital leadership personnel either overseeing defence of a ship's airlocks, or leading the assault against them. Ensuring that the enemy commander does not survive this battle, no matter its wider strategic outcome, is a victory in its own right.

At the end of the battle, each player scores 10 victory points if their opponent's **WARLORD** is destroyed.

'Heretic Astartes boarding parties reported ingressing on decks three through nineteen, twenty-one through thirty-seven. Damage and casualty reports catastrophic. I give the order: empty these decks. Vent them all. Evacuate what personnel we can, seal the bulkheads and leave the foul traitors into the void from whence they came. Cast them into the abyss and into the embrace of their false deities. God-Emperor, I pray that this will be enough.'

- Commodore Kerel Suntu of the Imperial Navy vessel His Everlasting Wrath, *captured by Black Legion warriors during the Bulhan Uprising*


Inaccessible Area
A4
Defender Entry Zone
B3
Airlock
C5
A3
A2
Airlock
A2
C4
A1
B2
B3
B1
A2
Patrol Entry Zone
C4
B1
A4
A1
Airlock
B3
A3
A3
Airlock
Attacker Entry Zone
C1
C5
A4
A1
Defender Entry Zone
B1
B1
B3
A1
C1
A4
A2
B3
A3
B2
B2
Defender Entry Zone
Attacker Entry Zone
B3
Attacker Entry Zone

BOARDING ACTION MISSION

PULL THEIR TEETH

MISSION BRIEFING

Warships are not only vital for controlling a conflict in space, they provide indispensable fire support to ground troops, bombarding the enemy with ferocious salvoes of apocalyptic weaponry, slaughtering thousands and reducing fortresses to rubble. Thus it is of primary importance for belligerents in any planetary conflict to ensure that the enemy's void vessels are kept from bombarding their forces. This is but one more task for daring boarding troops, who must fight hard to stop the enemy's cannons from annihilating their comrades on the ground below.

MISSION RULES

Rapid Offence: The Attacker has the first turn.

Control Node: The Control Node is the only objective marker that can have the Secure Site action performed on it. In addition, any unit can perform the Secure Site action on that objective marker, regardless of whether or not that unit has the Objective Secured ability.

Underdog Bonus: If a player receives an Underdog bonus, that player starts the battle with 1 additional Command point.

OBJECTIVES

DESTROY GROUND TARGETS

Progressive Objective

The ship's weapons batteries depend upon a continuous supply of ammunition to be effective. Should the defenders manage to keep these immense guns firing, the war for the planet below will swing in their favour – all the more so if they can retain control of vital control nodes to ensure deadly accurate fire.

The Attacker starts the battle with 60 victory points. At the start of the Defender's Command phase:

- If the Defender controls the Control Node objective marker, for each Loader objective marker they control, subtract 10 victory points from the Attacker (to a minimum of 0 victory points) and the Defender scores 10 victory points.
- Otherwise, for each Loader objective marker the Defender controls, subtract 5 victory points from the Attacker (to a minimum of 0 victory points) and the Defender scores 5 victory points.

SEIZE THE GUNS

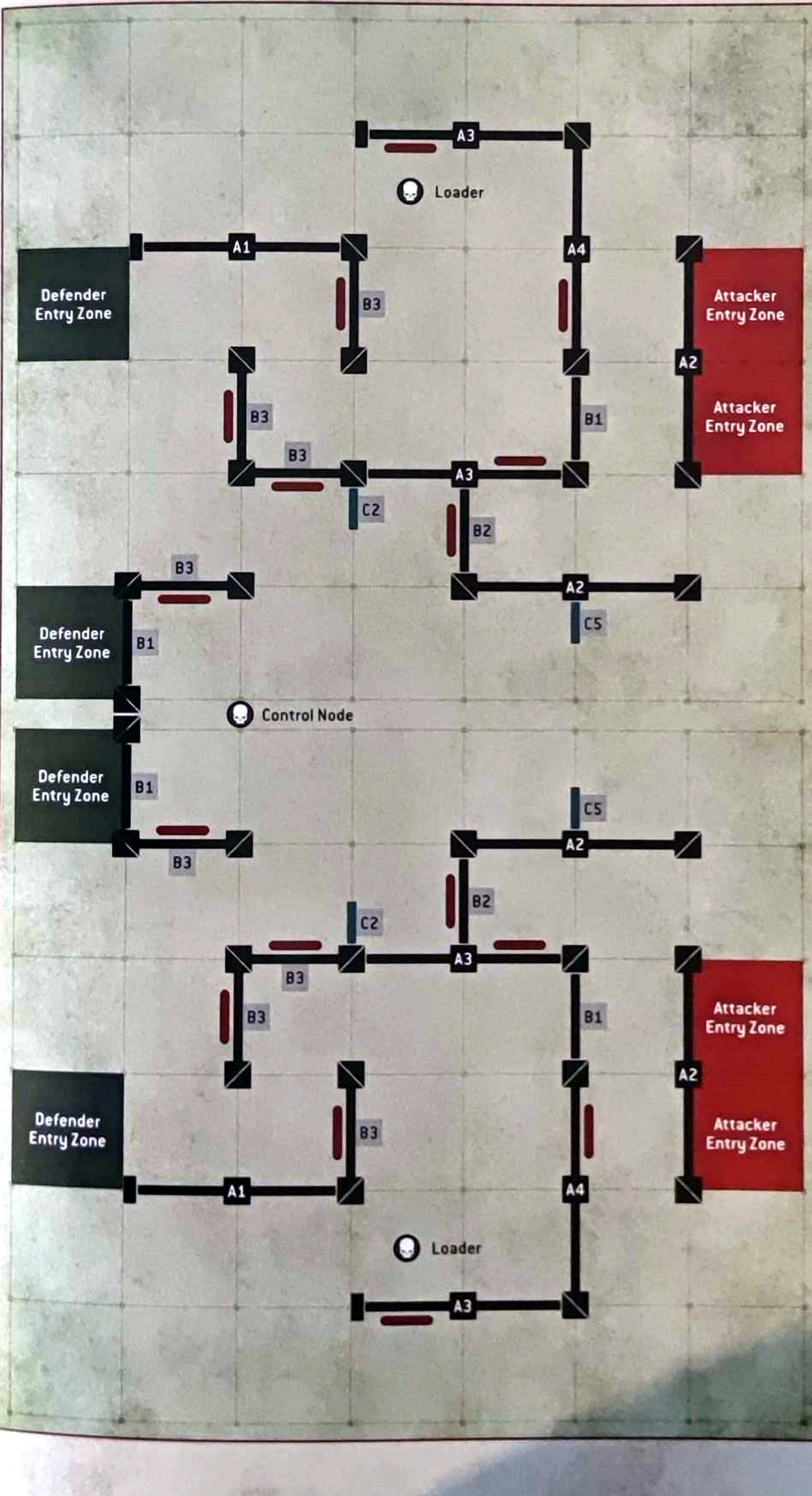
Progressive Objective

Warship weapons are lethal in the hands of whoever controls them, and the attackers are well aware of this fact. If they can seize the ship's guns, even if they cannot operate them with the same efficiency as the defenders, they will unleash hell upon their enemies on the ground.

At the start of the Attacker's Command phase, if they control the Control Node objective marker, they score 5 victory points.

'Our comrades are dying down there, annihilated by cowards who hide far off the ground in their armoured warship! They're quivering in their boots now and emptying their bowels, because we're stuck in amongst them. We're going to make them pay for every last soldier of Cadia they've obliterated on the surface, and make them rue the day they decided to take us on.'

– Kasrkin Captain Kyser Viers, during the Kuzui Campaign


A3
Loader
A1
A4
Defender Entry Zone
B3
Attacker Entry Zone
A2
B3
B1
B3
A3
C2
B2
B3
A2
C5
Defender Entry Zone
B1
Control Node
Defender Entry Zone
B1
C5
B3
A2
B3
C2
B2
A3
B3
B3
B1
Attacker Entry Zone
A2
Defender Entry Zone
B3
Attacker Entry Zone
A1
A4
Loader
A3

BOARDING ACTION MISSION

STRONGROOMS

MISSION BRIEFING

Many a naval vessel holds within its depths potent weapons and ancient artefacts. Invariably these are stored within all but impenetrable vaults, secured by psychic wards, automated weapons systems, shield generators or by other means. Should an attacker successfully seize these treasures, they will not only gain powerful assets for themselves, but also grievously undermine the morale of their enemies.

MISSION RULES

Rapid Offence: The Attacker has the first turn.

Guard Duty: Before the battle, at the start of the Deploy Armies step, for each Strongroom, the Defender selects one unit from their army and sets that unit up within that Strongroom.

Underdog Bonus: If a player receives an Underdog bonus, that player starts the battle with 1 additional Command point.

OBJECTIVES

THEY ARE OURS

End Game Objective

The capture of each enemy artefact is an impressive feat in itself, showing courage, daring and warrior skill in equal measure. Such deeds are not only short-term victories, however, as word of the attackers' success will undoubtedly buoy the spirits of their comrades across a multitude of other battlefronts.

At the end of the battle, the Attacker scores 45 victory points for each objective marker they control.

PURGE THE THIEVES

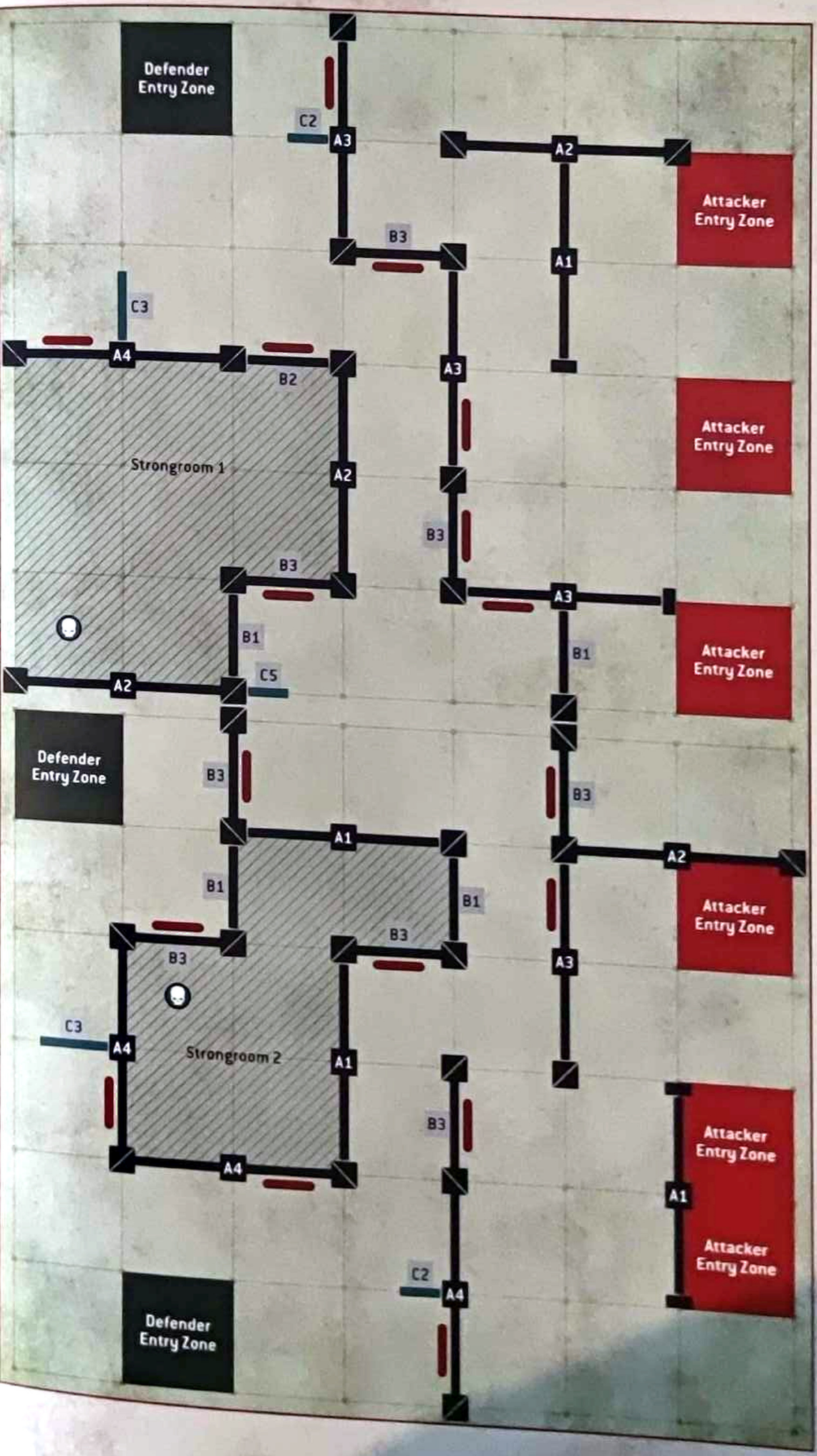
End Game Objective

For every warrior slain in their foolhardy effort to seize the defenders' most prized possessions, a warning is sent out to any others who might dare to do the same: to attempt this is to be ruthlessly destroyed.

At the end of the battle, total the points values of the Attacker's Boarding Squads that are destroyed. The Defender scores the corresponding number of victory points shown in the table below.

PURGE THE THIEVES

POINTS TOTAL OF DESTROYED BOARDING SQUADS	DEFENDER VICTORY POINTS
0-124	0
125-249	30
250-374	60
375+	90


Defender Entry Zone
C2
A3
A2
Attacker Entry Zone
B3
A1
C3
A4
B2
Strongroom 1
A2
Attacker Entry Zone
B3
A3
B3
B1
Attacker Entry Zone
C5
A2
Defender Entry Zone
B1
B3
A2
B3
A1
B1
B1
B3
B3
A3
C3
A4
Strongroom 2
A1
B3
Attacker Entry Zone
A1
Attacker Entry Zone
C2
A4
Defender Entry Zone

BOARDING ACTION MISSION

JAILBREAK

MISSION BRIEFING

It is far from uncommon in the chaos of ship-to-ship boarding actions for isolated units to become captured by their enemies. The fate that awaits such warriors is almost certainly torture, slavery or death. They live in hope, however, that their comrades are striking out to free them so they may fight another day.

MISSION RULES

Imprisoned: Before the battle, at the start of the Deploy Armies step, the Attacker selects one unit from their army with a minimum points cost of 60 points to be imprisoned. That unit is set up within the Prison Cells. The imprisoned unit:

- Cannot be removed from the battlefield at any point, unless destroyed.
- Cannot make use of any rule that would allow it to move through Walls or terrain features while the Prison Cells' Hatchway is still closed.
- Cannot perform the Operate Hatchway action on the Prison Cells' Hatchway.
- In the Attacker's Command phase, if there are no units from the Defender's army wholly within the Guard Entry Zone, and the imprisoned unit is within 1" of the Prison Cells' Hatchway, then the imprisoned unit can attempt to force the Hatch. If it does so, roll one D6: if the result is less than that unit's Strength characteristic, open the Prison Cells' Hatchway.

Prison Cell: Units other than the imprisoned unit cannot make use of any ability that allows them to be set up within the Prison Cells. Once the Prison Cells' Hatchway has been opened, it cannot be closed again.

Prison Guards: Before the battle, the Defender can only set up units from their army within the Guard Entry Zone and the Patrol Entry Zones (they cannot use the Backup Entry Zones), and one unit from their army must be set up within the Guard Entry Zone. Once the first battle round has started, they can only use their Backup Entry Zones when setting up any Strategic Reserve units from their army in an Entry Zone.

Rapid Offence: The Attacker has the first turn.

Silent Infiltration: At the start of the first battle round, the Attacker can begin infiltrating units until the alarm is set off. They select one unit from their army and roll one D6: on a 2+, the alarm is not set off and that unit can make a Normal Move of up to 6". They can then select another unit from their army that has not yet been selected for this rule and roll again, subtracting 1 from the roll. This continues, subtracting 1 from the roll for each successive unit, until either the alarm goes off or the Attacker has no more units to move.

Underdog Bonus: If a player receives an Underdog bonus, that player starts the battle with 1 additional Command point.

OBJECTIVES

ESCAPE

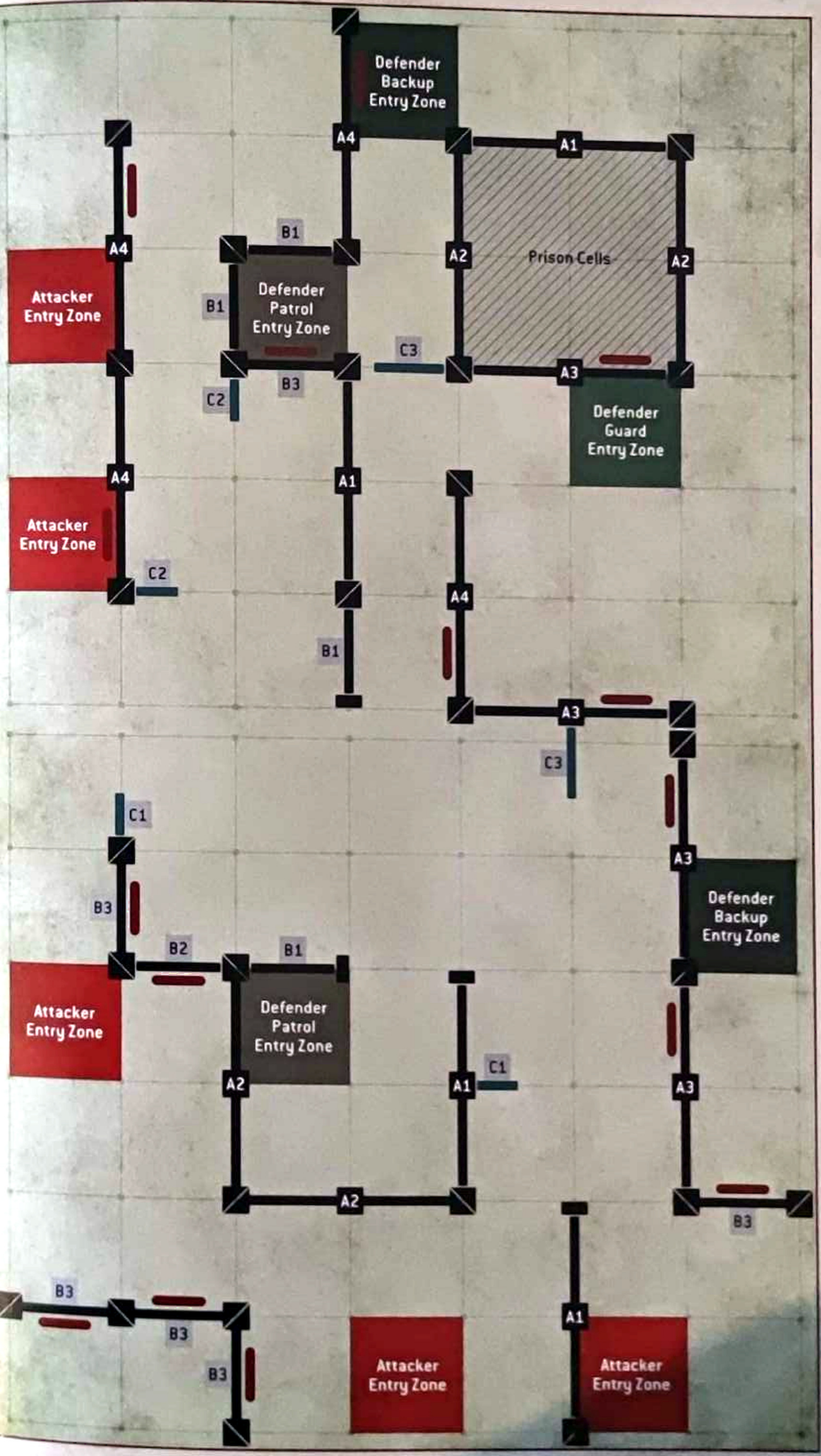
End Game Objective

The captors of imprisoned warriors would rather see their prisoners dead than free, and will fight furiously to stop any breakout efforts. For those attempting to free their captured comrades, meanwhile, the fiercest fighting is often in the escape.

At the end of the battle, players score victory points as shown in the table below.

ESCAPE

SITUATION	ATTACKER VICTORY POINTS	DEFENDER VICTORY POINTS
Imprisoned unit still within Prison Cells	0	90
Imprisoned unit not within Prison Cells, but destroyed	30	60
Imprisoned unit not within Prison Cells and not destroyed, but within Engagement Range of one or more models from the Defender's army	60	30
Imprisoned unit not within Prison Cells, not destroyed, and not within Engagement Range of any models from the Defender's army	90	0

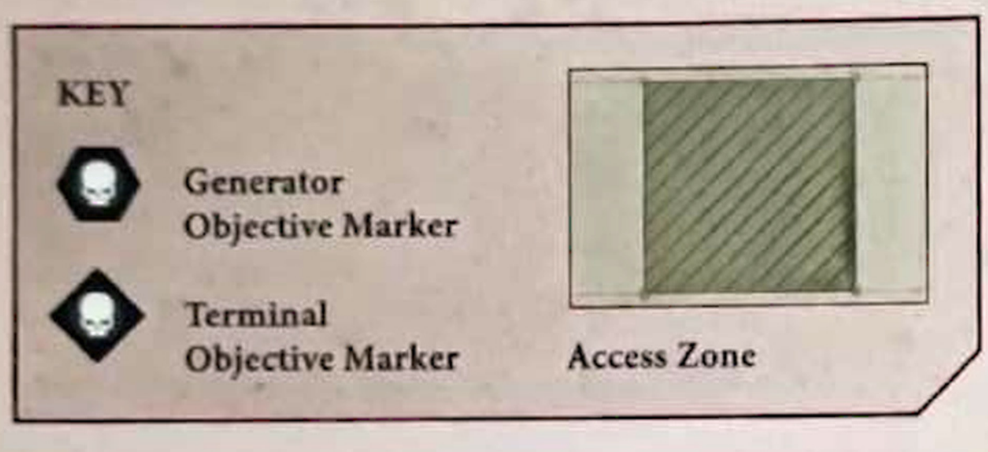

Defender
Backup
Entry Zone
A4
A1
B1
A4
A2
Prison Cells
A2
Attacker
Entry Zone
B1
Defender
Patrol
Entry Zone
C3
B3
A3
C2
Defender
Guard
Entry Zone
A4
A1
Attacker
Entry Zone
C2
A4
B1
A3
C3
C1
B3
A3
Defender
Backup
Entry Zone
B2
B1
Attacker
Entry Zone
Defender
Patrol
Entry Zone
C1
A2
A1
A3
B3
A2
B3
B3
B3
Attacker
Entry Zone
A1
Attacker
Entry Zone

BOARDING ACTION MISSION

POWER THE GENERATORS

MISSION BRIEFING

A ship's data-fanes are often packed full of strategic intelligence that can turn the tide of battles or even wars. Well aware of this, attackers may attempt to channel power to such terminals and thus activate them to mine their secrets.



MISSION RULES

Set Defence: The Defender has the first turn.

Multi-level: When setting up the battlefield, each game board represents a different level within the ship. It is not possible to move units from one game board to the other unless using the Change Level action (see below), and units on one game board are not visible to those on the other.

Change Level: Units from your army can perform the following action:

Change Level (Action): One or more units from your army can start to perform this Action at the end of the Move Units step of your Movement phase, if every model in that unit is within an Access Zone. This action can be performed by a unit that Advanced or Fell Back this turn. The action is completed at the end of your Movement phase. If completed, remove that unit from the battlefield and set it up with every model within the corresponding Access Zone on the other game board (e.g. if a unit completed this action while in Access Zone A on the Deck Level, it would be set up within Access Zone A on the Sub-level). When setting a unit up in this way, you can set it up within Engagement Range of enemy units. If you do so, then those units will be eligible to fight during the subsequent Fight phase, but none of them count as having made a charge move this turn.

Fighting Between Decks: During the Fight phase, while a model is within an Access Zone it counts as being visible to and within Engagement Range of any opposing models that are within the corresponding Access Zone on the other game board. This means that those models' units are eligible to fight and can make melee attacks against one another. Each time a model in such a unit makes a pile-in or consolidation move, that model can move in any direction but must end that move closer to the centre of that Access Zone.

Focused Operatives: Any unit can perform the Secure Site action, regardless of whether or not that unit has the Objective Secured ability.

Underdog Bonus: If a player receives an Underdog bonus, that player starts the battle with 1 additional Command point.

OBJECTIVES

ACCESS THE DATA

Progressive Objective

For every sub-level generator the attackers succeed in activating, a terminal ripe with vital data becomes available to access. Securing such information will no doubt aid their wider war, earning the assaulting warriors much renown.

At the end of the Attacker's Command phase, for each Generator objective marker they control, they can select one Terminal objective marker to be powered up until the end of the turn, and then for each powered up Terminal objective marker they control, they score 10 victory points.

In the fifth battle round, the Attacker does this at the end of their turn, instead of at the end of their Command phase.

ROUT AND CRUSH THEM

End Game Objective

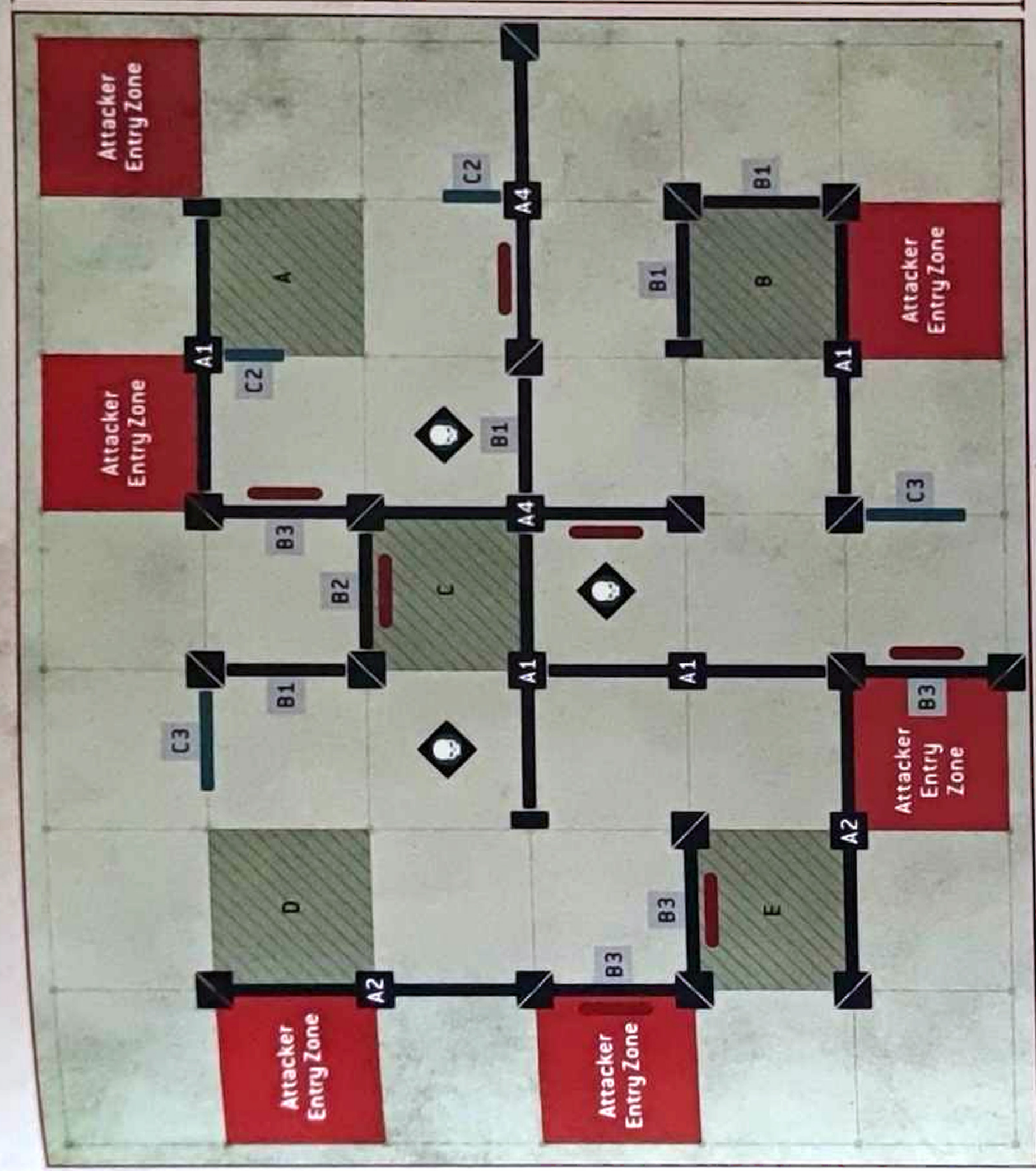
The thought of the enemy seizing such vital intelligence is a terrible one. Every last one must be routed from the area, hunted down and eliminated, to ensure no data is successfully stolen.

At the end of the battle, total the points values of the Attacker's Boarding Squads that are destroyed. The Defender scores the corresponding number of victory points shown in the table below.

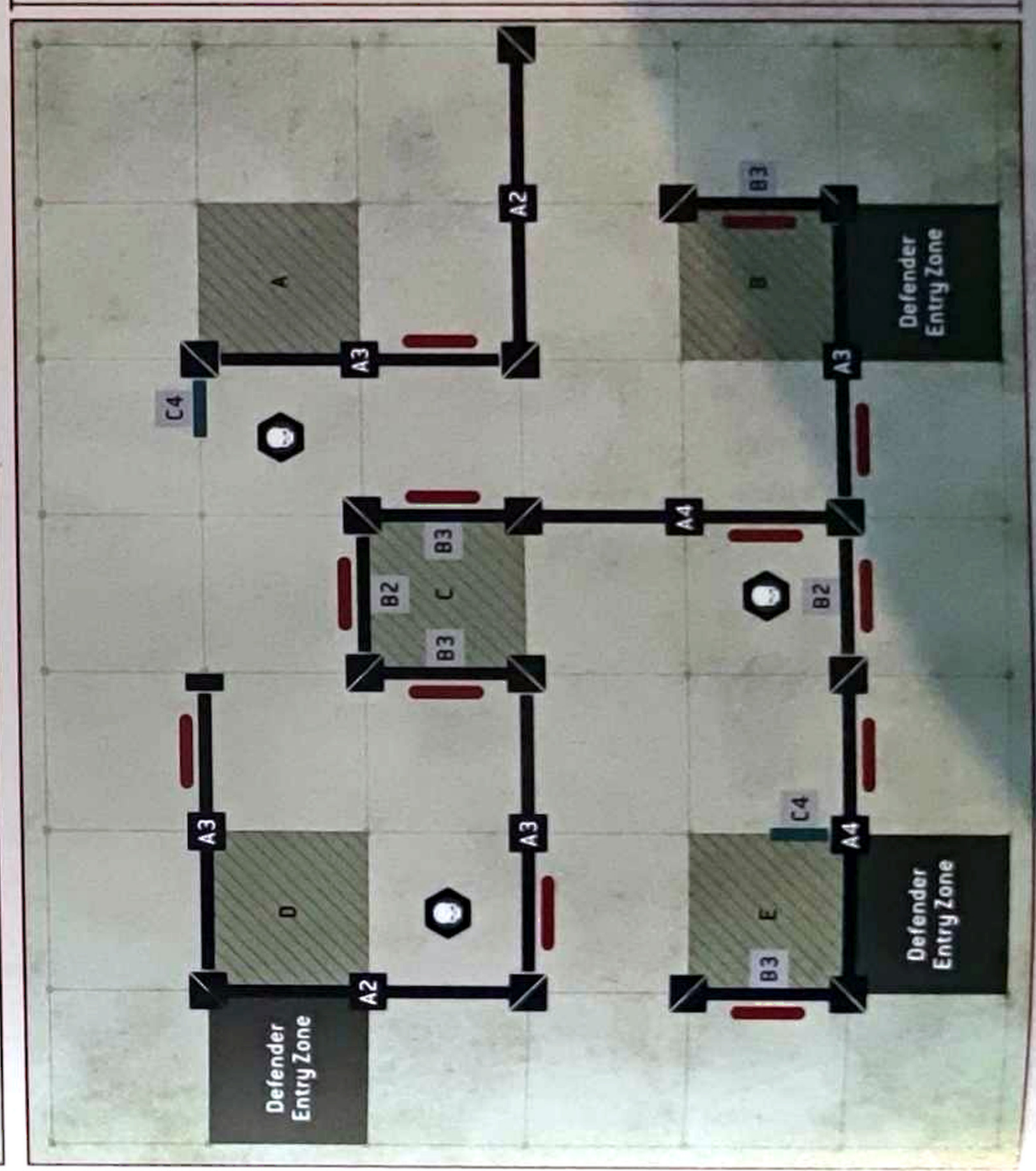
ROUT AND CRUSH THEM	
POINTS TOTAL OF DESTROYED BOARDING SQUADS	DEFENDER VICTORY POINTS
0-124	0
125-249	15
250-374	40
375-499	60
500	80

In addition, at the end of the battle, the Defender scores 20 victory points if the Attacker's **WARLORD** is destroyed.

Deck Level



Sub-level



BOARDING ACTION MISSION

CORRUPT THE MACHINE SPIRIT

MISSION BRIEFING

No void ship, no matter how large or small, can function without the many machine spirits that dwell within its systems, and corrupting such spirits is thus a sure-fire method of disabling an enemy vessel. The ways of doing this are often dark indeed, involving tech-viruses, machinopathogens or system-scourges, each capable of crippling key systems or even turning them against the ship's crew or allied void craft.

MISSION RULES

Set Defence: The Defender has the first turn.

Corrupt the Machine Spirit: At the end of the Attacker's Command phase, for each objective marker they control, they can attempt to corrupt that objective marker. If they do so, roll one D6: on a 2+, that objective marker is corrupted and removed from the battlefield. Each time an objective marker is corrupted, the Attacker can select one of the following consequences that has not already been selected:

- **Door Controls:** The Attacker can open or close up to three Hatchways; the Defender cannot attempt to prevent these Hatchways from being opened or closed.
- **Steam Venting Overrides:** Until the start of the Attacker's next Command phase, ranged attacks cannot target units more than 6" away from the attacking model.
- **Gravitational Systems:** Until the start of the Attacker's next Command phase, units cannot perform the Set to Defend or Set Overwatch actions. Any units that are already Set to Defend or have Set Overwatch are no longer in either of those states.
- **Communications Network:** Until the end of the Attacker's next Command phase, the Defender cannot gain Command points.

Underdog Bonus: If a player receives an Underdog bonus, that player starts the battle with 1 additional Command point.

OBJECTIVES

HUMBLE THE MACHINE

End Game Objective

The shutdown of a prized enemy ship, one crucial system at a time, is a wonderful thing for attackers to behold. Beyond that, rendering a mighty vessel inert can tip the scales of battle in their favour and see them win much glory.

At the end of the battle, the Attacker scores 20 victory points for each objective marker they corrupted (see left).

THWART THE CORRUPTERS

End Game Objective

Nothing less than fighting tooth and nail will be sufficient to defend the ship's machine spirits. Every functioning system ensures the vessel has a greater chance of surviving the coming battles, and denies the foe an advantage.

At the end of the battle, the Defender scores 30 victory points for each objective marker they control.

Defender Entry Zone

C2

A3

A2

Defender Entry Zone

B3

B3

B3

A4

C2

B3

A4

C3

B3

A1

C3

A1

A1

A4

B2

B3

C5

B3

Attacker Entry Zone

Attacker Entry Zone

Attacker Entry Zone

Attacker Entry Zone

Defender Entry Zone

A3

B1

A4

A3

A1

B1

B3

A2

A3

B1

A2

B2

C5

A2

Defender Entry Zone

Defender Entry Zone